

The Devil &
Family Happiness

The Devil & Family Happiness

by

Leo Tolstoy

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Family Happiness

Translator's Note to
FAMILY HAPPINESS

'FAMILY HAPPINESS' can be considered as Tolstoy's first novel; *Childhood, Adolescence and Youth*, although published a few years earlier as fiction, is in reality almost pure autobiography, and *The Cossacks*, which Tolstoy began to write before *Family Happiness*, was not finished or published until three years after it. It is not known precisely when Tolstoy began to write *Family Happiness*, but he was working on it in 1858, and the novel was first published in 1859 in the first two April issues of the periodical *Russki Vestnik*.

Like almost all Tolstoy's novels, *Family Happiness* has an autobiographical character. In a letter to his biographer Biryukov, dated 27th November, 1903, Tolstoy wrote: 'Then, most important of all, there was something really serious—Valeriya Arsyeneva. She is still alive, married a Volkov, and is living in Paris. I was almost engaged to her (*Family Happiness*) and there are a lot of bundles of letters which I wrote to her.'

Valeriya Vladimirovna Arsyeneva was born in 1836 and died in Basle in 1909. She was married twice, first to Talyzin in 1858, and then to Volkov. Tolstoy met her in 1856—her parents' estate, Sudakovo, was not far from Yasnaya Polyana—and fell in love with her. Her daughter told P. Pavlov¹ in that they finally

parted company because Valeriya refused to accept the conditions which Tolstoy attached to his proposal of marriage: twenty years' quiet seclusion in the country.

There are certainly some similarities between Masha and Sergei Mikhailovitch in the novel, and Tolstoy and Valeriya. For instance, Tolstoy was guardian to Valeriya's little brother, and they lived on neighbouring estates. But it cannot be said that the novel is based on Tolstoy's relationship with Valeriya, for *Family Happiness* is the story of a marriage and is, moreover, told from the woman's point of view. It seems rather that Tolstoy wrote the novel in order to prove to himself that, if he had married Valeriya, the marriage would probably not have been a success. Tolstoy's attitude to the book seems to confirm this theory. While he was writing the novel he was most enthusiastic about it, and described it as a 'poem', but when he had finished writing it he disliked it intensely, and was even against its publication. It seems probable that, by the time the book was finished, Tolstoy had lost interest both in Valeriya—who was already married to someone else by then—and in the ideas which had originally prompted him to write the book. Vasili Petrovitch Botkin, the writer and critic, thought highly of *Family Happiness*, especially of Part II, and it was partly due to him that the book was finally published. He said of it: 'In spite of the repulsive puritanism in the book, the presence of a great talent continually makes itself felt'. And he wrote of Part II that it was 'excellent in almost every respect'.

Family Happiness was not received with particular

enthusiasm when it was published—indeed, as Vogüé has pointed out in *Le Roman Russe*, Tolstoy's disillusioned and even rather cynical approach to the question of marriage was too much ahead of its time. A contemporary critic said scathingly that mothers could certainly give *Family Happiness* to their daughters without fearing any ill-effects, which shows to what an extent the novel was misunderstood. Surely Tolstoy's subtle description of how marriage can transform the dreams of youth into the grey, everyday relationship of habit described at the end of the book is the last thing to give one's unmarried daughters—more intelligent advice would have been, in the words of the nursery-rhyme, 'give it to your sons. . . .'

Family Happiness is probably more a woman's than a man's book, which may explain why, on the whole, it has not appealed to the critics. Tolstoy had that peculiar and extremely rare gift, which is given to only a very few male novelists—amongst contemporary writers who have it Christopher Morley and Alberto Moravia come to mind—of understanding women and women's feelings almost better than women do themselves. Although Sergei Mikhailovitch—like his successors Levin, Pierre and Nekhlyudov—is undoubtedly to a certain extent a self-portrait of Tolstoy, it is *Masha*, not Sergei Mikhailovitch, who really comes to life in the book, and it is her feelings and reactions which are most subtly described.

The ending of the novel has been often criticised, and has sometimes been misconstrued by translators. The critics complain that the ending is 'unsatisfactory'

—which indeed it is, but not in the sense the critics mean. The majority of unhappy marriages do not end in the divorce-court even nowadays—they continue, ‘unsatisfactorily’, for a lifetime. Translators—both French and English—apparently thought the last paragraph unsatisfactory too, and so they changed it, as well as some of the names and other small details in the book. In one case, at least, a translator not only managed to change the whole character of the book with a single sentence, but also may be said to have altered the influence which the book had on subsequent writers. F. W. J. Hemmings in an interesting and informative book, *The Russian Novel in France, 1884-1914*, describes the influence that

Tolstoy's ideas—and, more particularly, his ideas on family life—had on certain French writers, especially on Paul Margueritte and Edouard Rod. In order to illustrate this, Mr Hemmings quotes the last paragraph of *Family Happiness* in the following version (the name of the translator is not stated):

The old (romantic) feeling stayed among those sweet memories to which there is no returning, and a new feeling of love for my children and for the father of my children marked the start of a new existence differently happy, and which I am still enjoying, *convinced that the reality of happiness is in the home and among the unsullied joys of family life.*

The words in italics were not written by Tolstoy, who certainly meant the title of the book to be ironical and, great artist and great preacher as he was, in this case for once sacrificed preaching to art.

P A R T O N E

I

KATIA, Sonia and I spent the whole winter by ourselves in the country; we were in mourning for my mother, who had died in the autumn.

Katia was an old friend of the family, the governess who had brought us all up and whom I remembered and had loved ever since I could remember myself. Sonia was my younger sister. We spent a gloomy and depressing winter in our old house at Pokrovskoye. The weather was cold and windy so that snowdrifts swept up higher than the windows, which were almost always frosted and dimmed; we hardly went anywhere the whole winter. We had few visitors, and those that did come brought no gaiety or joy to our house. They all had long faces and talked in a low voice as if afraid of waking somebody, they did not laugh, but would sigh and often—as they looked at me, and particularly at little Sonia in her black dress—they would weep. Death still seemed to make itself felt in the house; the grief and horror of death lingered in the air. Mamma's room was locked; every time I went past it on my way to bed I felt terrified, and yet something drew me to look into that cold and empty room.

I was then seventeen; in the very year of her death Mamma had wanted to move to town to bring me out.

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The loss of my mother was a great grief to me, but I must confess that this grief was partly enhanced by the feeling that I was young and pretty—as everyone told me—and that, for the second winter in succession, I was uselessly killing time in the seclusion of the country. Towards the end of the winter this feeling of depression induced by solitude, as well as simple boredom, grew so much that I seldom left my room and never even opened the piano or picked up a book. When Katia tried to persuade me to occupy myself in some way, I replied: 'I don't feel like it, I can't'; but in my heart I asked: 'What for? What's the use of doing anything when my best years are being uselessly wasted?' And tears were the only answer to this question.

I was told that I had grown thinner and was losing my looks at that time, but even this did not interest me. What for? For whom? It seemed to me that the whole of my life must be spent in that lonely back-water and helpless depression from which, alone, I had neither the strength nor even the will to escape. As the end of winter approached Katia began to worry about me, and decided to take me abroad at all costs. But to do this we needed money, and we scarcely knew what my mother had left us; we were daily expecting our guardian, who was supposed to come and look into our affairs.

In March our guardian arrived.

'Thank goodness!' Katia said to me, as I wandered aimlessly about like a shadow, with nothing to do, without any thoughts or wishes. 'Sergei Mikhailovitch

has arrived. He has sent to enquire about us, and would like to come to dinner. Pull yourself together, *Mashechka*', she added. 'Whatever will he think of you otherwise? He used to be so fond of you all.'

Sergei Mikhailovitch was a near neighbour of ours and, although much younger than my father, had been a friend of his. Apart from the fact that his arrival changed our plans and made it possible for us to leave for town, I had been accustomed to love and respect him since childhood. When Katia advised me to pull myself together she guessed that I should mind appearing in an unfavourable light to Sergei Mikhailovitch more than to any of our other friends. Besides, although like everyone else in the house from Katia and Sonia—his god-daughter—down to the last coachman, I loved him from habit, for me he had a special significance because of a remark which Mamma had once made in my presence. She had said that she hoped for just such a husband for me. Then this idea had seemed extraordinary to me and even unpleasant; my ideal was quite different. I imagined my hero as thin and spare, pale and sad; whereas Sergei Mikhailovitch was no longer in his first youth, was tall and thickset and, it seemed to me, always cheerful. But in spite of this, these words of my mother's took root in my imagination, and even six years before, when I was eleven years old and he used to say *tu* to me, when he would play with me and call me his 'little violet', I sometimes asked myself—not without alarm—what I would do if he should suddenly want to marry me.

Sergei Mikhailovitch arrived before dinner, for

which Katia had prepared spinach sauce and a special cream pudding. From the window I saw him drive up to the house in a small sleigh, but as soon as he reached the corner I hurried into the drawing-room, wanting to pretend that I was not expecting him at all. However, when I heard the clatter of feet in the hall, his loud voice and Katia's footsteps, I could contain myself no longer and went out to meet him. He was talking loudly and was smiling, holding Katia's hand. When he saw me he stopped, and looked at me for a few minutes without greeting me. I began to feel uncomfortable, and felt myself blushing.

'Ah! Can it really be you?' he said in his resolute and simple way, holding out his arms and coming towards me. 'How can one change so much! Where's the violet now? It's a rose you've turned into!'

He took my hand in his own large one, and squeezed it frankly and so hard that it almost hurt. I thought he would kiss my hand and I bent towards him, but he only squeezed my hand again and looked me straight in the eyes, steadily and cheerfully.

I had not seen him for six years. He had changed a great deal: he had become older and swarthier, and had grown side-whiskers which did not suit him at all; but his simple manner was the same, it was the same strong-featured, frank and honest face with bright, intelligent eyes, and the same kind, almost childish smile.

In five minutes he had ceased to be a guest and had become one of the family to all of us, even to the servants who particularly welcomed his arrival, as was

shown by their eagerness to be of service to him.

He did not behave at all like the neighbours who visited us after Mammia's death, and who felt obliged to sit with us silently and with tears in their eyes; on the contrary, he was talkative and cheerful, and did not mention Mamma at all, so that at first his indifference seemed odd to me, and even out of place on the part of such a close friend. But later I understood that it was not indifference but sincerity, and I was grateful for it. Later on in the evening, Katia sat in her old place in the drawing-room and poured out tea, as she had done in my mother's time; Sonia and I sat beside her; old Grigori found a pipe of Papa's and brought it to Sergei Mikhailovitch, who paced up and down the room as in the old days.

'What a lot of terrible changes this house has lived through, when one thinks of it!' he said, standing still.

'Yes', said Katia with a sigh, putting the lid on the samovar; she looked at him, and was already on the verge of tears.

'You, I think, can remember your father?' he said, turning to me.

'Very slightly', I replied.

'How well you would have got on with him now!' he said quietly and thoughtfully, looking at my forehead. 'I loved your father very much!' he added, even more quietly, and it seemed to me that his eyes shone.

'And now God has taken her too!' said Katia, and at once put her napkin on the teapot, brought out her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

'Yes, this house has seen terrible changes', he repeated, turning away. 'Sonia, show me your toys', he added after a moment, and went into the ball-room. When he had gone I looked at Katia with my eyes full of tears.

'He is such a good friend!' she said.

And indeed I somehow felt warmed and comforted by the sympathy of this man, a stranger, and yet so kind.

Sonia's squeals and the sound of his romping with her came from the ball-room. I sent him some tea: we heard him sit down at the piano, and he started to bang the keys with Sonia's little hands.

'Maria Alexandrovna!' I heard him call. 'Come here and play something!'

I was pleased that he addressed me in such a friendly and peremptory way; I got up and went to him.

'Here, play this', he said, opening the Beethoven album at the *adagio* of the sonata *quasi una fantasia*. 'Let's see how you play', he added, and took his tea to a corner of the room.

I felt for some reason that I could neither refuse him nor make the excuse that I played badly; I sat down obediently at the piano and began to play as best I could, although I feared his judgment, for I knew that he loved and understood music. The *adagio* was in keeping with the spirit of reminiscence which had been evoked by the conversation at tea, and I think I played it quite well. But he would not let me play the *scherzo*. 'No, you don't play this well', he said coming up to me. 'Leave this, but the first wasn't bad. You're

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musical, I think.' This moderate praise made me blush from sheer happiness. It was so strange and pleasant that he, a friend and equal of my father's, should be speaking to me seriously, as one grown-up to another, no longer treating me as a child as he had formerly. Katia went upstairs to put Sonia to bed, and we remained together in the ball-room.

He told me about my father, about how they had become friends, and of the good times they had had together when I was still in the school-room and playing with toys; and in his stories my father for the first time appeared to me as a simple and lovable man, such as I had never known him until then. He also asked me what I liked, what I read, and what I intended to do, and gave me his advice. He no longer seemed to me a humorist and a gay wag who would tease me and make toys for me, but a serious person, simple and affectionate, to whom I felt drawn and for whom I had involuntary respect. I felt happy and at ease, yet at the same time, in spite of myself, I was conscious of a certain tension while talking to him. I weighed every word I said; I was so anxious to be worthy of his love for my own sake, and not only to win it—as I had done so far—because I was my father's daughter.

When she had put Sonia to bed, Katia rejoined us, and she complained to him about my listlessness, which I had not mentioned.

'She didn't tell me the most important thing!' he said, smiling and reproachfully shaking his head at me.

'What is there to tell?' I said. 'It's very boring, and

anyway it will pass.' I now really thought that my depression would pass, that it had already passed, that, indeed, it had never existed.

'It's a bad thing not to be able to stand solitude', he said. 'Are you really a grown-up young lady?'

'Of course I'm a young lady', I replied, laughing.

'No; a young lady who is only alive so long as she is admired, but as soon as she is alone lets herself go and finds no delight in anything is not a real young lady: everything for show, and nothing for herself.'

In order to say something I said: 'You've got a fine opinion of me!'

'No!' After a moment's silence he continued: 'You're not like your father for nothing. You have *something* . . .' and his kind, attentive, way of looking at me once more flattered and pleasantly disconcerted me.

It was only then that I noticed that, in spite of having what seemed at first sight a cheerful face, he had his own particular way of looking at one; direct to begin with, but increasingly attentive and somewhat sad.

'You mustn't and you can't be bored', he said. 'You have your music, which you appreciate, books, study, your whole life is in front of you, and you must prepare yourself for it now, or else you will regret it later. In a year's time it will already be too late.'

He spoke to me as a father or an uncle, and I felt that he was constantly restraining himself from speaking to me as an equal. I was hurt that he should consider me beneath him, and at the same time I was pleased that

he should think it necessary to try to be something different just for me.

For the rest of the evening he talked business with Katia.

'Well, goodbyc, dear friends', he said, getting up and taking my hand.

'When shall we see you again?' Katia asked.

'In the spring', he replied, still holding my hand. 'I'm going to Danilovka now (our other estate); I'll see how things are and do what I can there, then I'll go to Moscow on my own business, and then, in the summer, we shall see something of each other.'

'Shan't we really see you all that time?' I said sadly; and indeed, I already hoped to see him every day: I suddenly felt miserable, and afraid that my depression would return. I must have revealed this by my look and tone of voice.

'You must study more—and don't mope', he said in a way which seemed to me too cold and forthright. 'And in spring I will set you an examination', he added, letting go my hand and not looking at me.

In the hall, where we were standing to see him off, he hurriedly put on his fur coat, and again avoided looking at me. 'There's no point in him trying like that!' I thought. 'Does he really think I like it so much when he looks at me? He's a good man, a very good man . . . but that's all.'

However, that evening Katia and I stayed awake very late and talked, not of him, but of how we would spend the coming summer, of where and how we would live in the winter. The dreadful question: what

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for: no longer arose in my mind. It seemed both simple and obvious that one must live in order to be happy, and my future appeared very happy. It was as if life and light had suddenly flooded our gloomy old house at Pokrovskoye.

II

IN due course spring came. My former depression had left me, and was succeeded by the dreamy melancholy of spring-time, full of ill-defined hopes and longings. Although I no longer spent my time as I had done at the beginning of the winter, but now gave lessons to Sonia, played the piano and read, I would often go out into the park and wander for hours along its avenues, or sit on a bench and give myself up to heaven knows what thoughts, what wishes and hopes! Sometimes, too, I would sit up all night at my window, especially on moon-lit nights; and sometimes I would slip on a jacket and would steal out into the garden unbeknown to Katia, and would run through the dew to the pond; and one night I even went as far as the field, and walked all round the garden by myself.

Looking back, I find it hard to remember and to understand the dreams which then filled my imagination. Even when I do recall them to mind, I find it difficult to believe that those were really my dreams, so

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strange were they and so far removed from life.

At the end of May Sergei Mikhailovitch returned from his travels, as he had promised.

The first time he came to see us he arrived in the evening, when we were not expecting him at all. We were sitting on the terrace, and were just about to have tea. The garden was already covered in green, and nightingales had made their homes in the overgrown flower bushes for the whole of June. The tops of the flowery lilac bushes around us were strewn with white and mauve, with flowers just starting to bloom, and the foliage of the birch avenue was transparent in the setting sun. The terrace lay in cool shade, and a heavy dew covered the grass. From the yard beyond the garden came sounds of the day drawing to its close, the sound of the cattle being driven in; Nikon, the village simpleton, rode along the path in front of the terrace with a barrel, and the cool stream of water from the watering-can made dark circles in the freshly-dug earth round the dahlias and their supports. On the terrace the shining, well-polished samovar stood boiling on the white table-cloth in front of us, and there were pretzels and cakes and cream for tea. Katia, with her podgy hands, was busily washing the cups. I was hungry after bathing, and without waiting for tea I was eating bread with thick, fresh cream. I was wearing a gingham blouse with open sleeves, and my wet hair was tied up in a handkerchief. Katia was the first to see him through the window.

‘Ah! Sergei Mikhailovitch!’ she said. ‘We were just talking about you!’

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I stood up, and wanted to go and change, but he caught me as I reached the door.

'Oh, one doesn't stand on ceremony in the country', he said, looking at the handkerchief round my head and smiling. 'You don't mind being seen like that by Grigori, and really I am just another Grigori so far as you are concerned.' But it seemed to me that, even as he was speaking, he was looking at me in a way that Grigori would never have looked at me, and I felt uncomfortable.

'I won't be a minute', I said, as I left him.

'What's wrong with you as you are?' he called after me. 'Just like a young peasant woman!'

'How strangely he looked at me', I thought as I hurriedly changed upstairs. 'But anyway, thank goodness he's come: it will be more cheerful now!' I glanced at the mirror, ran downstairs gaily, and without concealing my haste I went out panting on to the terrace. He was sitting at the table and telling Katia about our affairs. He glanced at me, smiling, and went on talking. Judging from what he was saying, our finances were in an excellent state: now we should only have to spend the summer in the country, and then we could either go to St Petersburg for the sake of Sonia's education, or go abroad.

'If only you could come abroad with us!' said Katia. 'We shall be quite lost there by ourselves.'

'Ah, if only I could go round the world with you!' he said, half in jest and half in earnest.

'Well, why not?' I said. 'Let's go round the world!'

He smiled and shook his head.

‘And what about my mother? What about my business?’ he said. ‘But anyway, that’s beside the point. Now, tell me what you’ve been doing all this time. You haven’t been moping any more?’

When I told him that while he had been away I had been busy and had not been bored, and when Katia confirmed what I said, he praised me and gave me encouragement both by what he said and by the way he looked at me, as if I was a child and as if he had a right to do so. I thought it essential to tell him all the good things that I had done frankly and in great detail, and to make a clean breast of everything which might displease him, as if I was at confession. It was such a lovely evening that when tea had been cleared away we remained on the terrace; I was so interested in the conversation that I never noticed how, little by little, the human sounds around us had died away. The scent of flowers grew stronger, heavy dew moistened the grass, in a nearby lilac bush a nightingale trilled, and on hearing our voices became silent again; the starry sky seemed to envelop us.

I only noticed that it was getting dark when a bat suddenly flew noiselessly under the canvas awning of the terrace, and fluttered round my white handkerchief. I squeezed myself against the wall, and wanted to cry out—but the bat escaped from under the awning as silently and swiftly as it had come, and was lost to view in the dusk of the garden.

‘How I love your Pokrovskoye’, he said, interrupting the conversation. ‘I’d love to spend my life just sitting here on this terrace!’

'Well, why not?' said Katia. 'Go on sitting here!'

'Ah! Go on sitting here!' he said. 'Life doesn't sit still.'

'Why don't you get married?' said Katia. 'You'd make a splendid husband.'

'Why? Because I like sitting still?' and he laughed. 'No, Katerina Karlovna, it's already too late for you and me to marry. People have long since ceased to consider me as eligible. I fully agree with them, and I can assure you that I feel all the better for it.'

It seemed to me that somehow he said this with a kind of unnatural enthusiasm.

'What a thing to say! Thirty-six years old, and your life finished!' said Katia.

'Yes, it certainly is', he continued, 'and all I want now is to sit still, whereas for marriage something else is needed. There, ask her what she thinks', he added, nodding at me. 'Those are the people who should be married off, and you and I will wish them joy.'

There was suppressed sadness and strain in his voice as he said this, which he could not hide from me. He was silent for a moment; neither Katia nor I said anything.

'Why, imagine', he continued, turning in his chair, 'imagine if I, by some unfortunate fluke, were suddenly to marry a seventeen-year-old girl like Mash . . . like Maria Alexandrovna. It's an excellent example, I'm very glad it's happened like that—it's the best possible example.'

I laughed, and could not understand at all what he was so glad about, and what it was that had happened.



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‘Now, tell me the truth, hand on your heart’, he said, turning to me jokingly, ‘wouldn’t you consider it a misfortune if you joined your life to that of an old, spent man, who only wants to sit still, whereas you have goodness knows what urges and desires?’

I felt uncomfortable, and was silent, not knowing what to answer.

‘Why, I’m not proposing to you’, he said, laughing, ‘but tell me truthfully—is that the sort of husband you dream about when you walk along the garden paths alone in the evenings: And wouldn’t it be a misfortune?’

‘Not a misfortune . . .’ I began.

‘But anyway, not a good thing’, he finished my sentence for me.

‘No, but perhaps I may be mistak — —’

But he interrupted me again.

‘There, you see, she’s absolutely right, and I am grateful for her frankness, and very glad that we’ve had this conversation. Besides, it would be the greatest misfortune for me’, he added.

‘What an oddity you are! You haven’t changed a bit’, said Katia, and left the terrace to give orders for dinner to be served.

We were both silent after Katia had left us, and around us all was silent too. Only the nightingale poured out its song over the garden, unhurriedly and calmly as nightingales do in the night, and no longer spasmodically and hesitantly as they do in the evening; and, for the first time that night, faraway from the bottom of the ravine, another nightingale gave it an

answering call. The one near us fell silent, as if listening for a minute, and then the sound of its even, clear trill came again, sharper and tenser than before. And there was majestic calm in those voices as they resounded in their own knight world, a world alien to us. The gardener went to his bed in the greenhouse, and we could hear the sound of his thick boots on the path grow fainter in the distance. Down the hill, someone whistled shrilly twice, and then all was silent once more. A leaf stirred with scarcely a sound, the awning of the terrace fluttered, and a fragrant scent hovered in the breeze and flooded the terrace. After what had been said the silence made me feel uncomfortable, but I did not know what to say. I looked at him. In the dusk his bright eyes looked back at me.

‘It’s fine to be alive!’ he said.

For some reason, I sighed.

‘What?’

‘It’s fine to be alive!’ he repeated.

We again became silent, and again I felt uncomfortable. I was thinking all the time that I had distressed him by agreeing that he was old, and I wanted to console him, but did not know how to do it.

‘Well, goodbye’, he said, getting up. ‘My mother is expecting me to supper; I’ve scarcely seen her today.’

‘But I wanted to play you a new sonata’, I said.

‘Another time’, he said coldly, it seemed to me.

‘Goodbye’.

I was now even more certain that I had hurt him, and felt sorry. Katia and I saw him off as far as the porch, and stood looking at the road along which he

had disappeared. When the sound of his horse's hooves had died away I went round to the terrace, and again looked at the garden, into the dewy mist full of night sounds, and for a long time I stood there and saw and heard all that I wished to see and hear.

He came to see us again—a second and then a third time—and the awkwardness which had arisen because of our strange conversation vanished completely, and never again made itself felt. All through the summer, he would visit us two or three times a week; I grew so accustomed to him that if ever he failed to visit us for some time my loneliness weighed on me, I became annoyed with him and felt that he was behaving badly in leaving me to myself. He treated me as if I was a young man with whom he was on particularly friendly terms, he questioned me, provoked the frankest and most intimate discussions, gave advice, encouraged me, and would sometimes scold and restrain me. But, in spite of his constant efforts to keep on my own level, I felt that, besides the part of him that I understood, there remained a whole alien world into which he did not consider it necessary to admit me, and it was this, above all, which maintained my respect for him and which attracted me to him. From Kattia and the neighbours I knew that, besides looking after his old mother with whom he lived, and managing his estate, and besides his duties as our guardian, he had some sort of local government duties which were causing him a great deal of unpleasantness; but what he thought about all this, what were his convictions, his plans, his hopes, I could never find out from him. As soon as I brought

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the conversation round to his affairs he would frown in his own particular way, as if to say: 'Come now, why should you bother about that?', and would change the subject. At first this used to offend me, but later on I became so used to the fact that we only discussed things which concerned me, that I came to regard this as quite natural.

Another thing that annoyed me at first, but which I appreciated afterwards, was his complete indifference and almost contempt for my appearance. He never, either by word or look, so much as hinted to me that I was pretty, but on the contrary, would make a wry face and laugh when people complimented me on my looks in front of him. He even liked to find fault with my appearance, and to tease me about it. The fashionable hair-styles and dresses in which Katia liked to dress me up for smart occasions only provoked his mockery—which hurt kind Katia's feelings and, at first, disconcerted me. Katia, having decided in her own mind that I was attractive to him, could not understand at all how he could fail to like seeing a woman who attracted him appearing at her very best. I, on the other hand, soon understood what he wanted. He wished to believe that I was devoid of affectation and, once I had understood this, not a shadow of affectation did, in fact, remain in my dresses, my hair-styles, my movements; but then its place was taken by the very obvious affectation of simplicity, at a time when I could not yet be simple. I knew that he loved me, but whether as a child or as a woman I did not yet ask myself; I prized this love, and feeling that he considered me to be the best girl in the

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world, I could not but wish that this illusion should remain with him. And I deceived him involuntarily; but in deceiving him, I became better myself. I felt that it was better and more worthy to show the best side of my nature rather than that of my body. It seemed to me that he at once sized up my hair, my hands, my face, my habits—whatever they were, good or bad—and knew that I could not add anything to my external appearance, apart from a desire to deceive. But he did not know my inner self, because he loved it and because at that time it was growing and developing; and in that I could—and did—deceive him. How simple my relations with him became once I had understood this! My groundless confusion and constraint of movement left me completely. I felt that, no matter how he saw me, full face or in profile, sitting or standing, with my hair up or down—he knew all of me and, it seemed to me, was pleased with me as I was. I believe that if, contrary to his habits, he were to have told me, as others did, that I had a beautiful face, I would not even have been pleased. But how glad and happy I would feel when, after some remark I had made, he would look at me steadily and say in voice charged with emotion to which he would try to give a jesting tone:

‘Yes, oh yes, you have *something* about you. I must say, you’re a fine girl!’

And why did he reward me in this way, filling my whole heart with pride and joy? Because I had said that my heart was warmed by old Grigori’s love for his grand-daughter, or because reading poetry moved me

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to tears, or because I had said that I preferred Mozart to Schulhoff. And it amazed me with what an extraordinary flair I guessed then what was good and what one should like, although at that time I had as yet no idea of what was good and what one should like. Many of my former tastes did not please him, and it was enough for him to show me, by a twitch of his eye-brow or a glance, that what I wanted to say displeased him; he had only to make his own particular, woeful and very slightly contemptuous expression, for me to think that I no longer liked what I had liked before. It sometimes happened that he just wanted to give me his advice about something, and I would feel that I already knew what he was going to say. He would look into my eyes as he asked me something, and his look would draw whatever thought he desired out of me. All my thoughts, all my feelings at that time were not my own, but were all his thoughts and feelings which suddenly became mine, which entered into my life and illuminated it. Without noticing it at all, I began to look at everything with different eyes: at Katia, at our servants, at Sonia, and at myself and my occupations. Books, which I had formerly read only in order to kill boredom, suddenly became one of my greatest pleasures in life—and only because we discussed books and read them together, and because he would bring them for me. Helping Sonia with her studies, giving her lessons, I used formerly to consider as onerous tasks which I forced myself to carry out only out of a sense of duty; he came to one of the lessons, and it became a joy for me to watch Sonia's progress. Before it had seemed an

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impossible task to learn a whole piece of music, but now, knowing that he would listen to it and, perhaps, praise me, I would play one passage forty times over, so that poor Katia would stop her ears up with cotton-wool—but I was never bored. I phrased the same old sonatas somehow quite differently now, and they sounded quite different and much better. Even Katia, whom I loved and knew as well as I knew myself, changed in my eyes. Only now did I understand that she was under no obligation to be mother, friend and slave to us as she, in fact, was. I understood all the unselfishness and devotion of that loving creature, I understood all I owed to her; and I loved her all the more. He taught me, too, to look at the people who worked for us—at the peasants, at the servants and girls—in quite a different way. Ridiculous as it may seem, I had lived amongst these people for seventeen years, and yet had remained more alien to them than I was to people whom I never saw; I never once realised that they had loves and desires and regrets, as I had. Our garden, our woods, our fields which I had known for so long, suddenly became new and beautiful to me. He was right when he said that there was only one undoubted happiness in life—to live for others. This seemed strange to me then, and I did not understand it, but this conviction imperceptibly entered my heart. He opened up a whole life of joy in the present, changing nothing in my life and adding nothing to it—apart from adding himself to every impression. Everything which had silently surrounded me since childhood suddenly came alive. It was enough for him

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to appear for all things to begin speaking to me, vying with each other to attain my innermost heart, and filling it with happiness.

During that summer I would often go upstairs to my room and lie down on the bed, and instead of the former nostalgia of spring and desires and hopes for the future, anxiety for my present happiness would envelop me. I could not fall asleep, and would get up and sit on Katia's bed and tell her that I was completely happy—which, when I think of it now, it was quite unnecessary to tell her, for she could see it for herself. But she would tell me that she, too, needed nothing, that she too was very happy—and she would kiss me. I believed her, for it seemed to me so essential and just that everyone should be happy. But Katia could think of sleep as well, and would even sometimes pretend to be annoyed and would drive me off her bed and fall asleep; whereas I would lie awake for hours analysing the reasons for my happiness. Sometimes I would get up and say my prayers again, praying in my own words to thank God for all the happiness which He had given me.

It was quiet in the room: only Katia breathed sleepily and evenly, the clock ticked near her, and I would turn round and whisper words to myself, or I would make the sign of the cross over myself and kiss the cross hanging round my neck. The doors were shut, the windows were shuttered, a fly or gnat would stir and buzz somewhere. I felt that I never wanted to leave that little room, I did not wish for morning to come, I did not want the spiritual atmosphere

surrounding me to dissolve. I felt that my dreams, my thoughts and prayers were live creatures, living there in the darkness with me, flying round my bed and standing over me. And every thought was his thought, and every feeling his feeling. I did not know then that this was love; I thought that one could have this feeling at any time, for no reason.

III

ONE DAY, at harvest time, I went into the garden after dinner with Katia and Sonia to our favourite bench in the shade of the lime trees by the ravine, from which there was a view of the wood and fields. Three days had passed since Sergei Mikhailovitch had visited us, and that day we were expecting him, especially as our bailiff had told us that he had promised to come by the fields. At about two o'clock we saw him on horseback, riding through a field of rye. Katia ordered peaches and cherries—which he liked very much—to be brought and, lying down on the bench, she looked at me with a smile and began to doze. I broke off a crooked, flat branch of lime with sappy leaves and bark that moistened my hand and, as I fanned Katia with it, I went on reading, frequently stopping to look at the path through the field by which he should arrive. Sonia was building a summer-house for her dolls at the foot of the old lime tree. The day was hot and still, it was very close, and dark clouds were piling up and

growing darker; ever since morning a storm had been gathering. I was tense, as always before a storm. But after midday the clouds began to thin out round the edges, the sun emerged in a clear sky; only in the distance a faint roll of thunder could be heard, and an occasional flash of lightning sent pale zig-zags down to earth, cutting through a heavy cloud which spread over the horizon and merged with the dust on the fields. It was clear that the storm would disperse that day—at any rate where we were. Along the road, parts of which could be seen beyond the garden, an endless succession of high carts loaded with sheaves slowly creaked along, while towards them empty carts rattled fast, making the legs of the peasants sitting on them shake and their shirts flap. The thick dust was not carried away, and did not settle, but hovered over the fence between the transparent foliage of the garden trees. Further off, in the field where the threshing was taking place, the same voices and squeaking wheels could be heard, the same yellow sheaves which had been slowly moving past the fence were there flying through the air, and before my eyes oval houses were growing, with pointed roofs and with the figures of peasants swarming on them. In front of us, in the dusty field, carts were moving too, the same yellow sheaves were there, and the same sounds of carts, of voices and songs reached us from afar. At one end of the field the expanse of stubble was gradually growing, streaked through with balks overgrown with wormwood. The brightly-coloured dresses of the women could be seen a little further down to the right in the unsightly and

entangled mown field, as the women bent down and gesticulated, binding the sheaves; and the entangled field was becoming clearer, and beautiful sheaves were being stacked on it close to each other. It was as if suddenly, before my eyes, summer was turning to autumn. Dust and heat lay everywhere, except on our favourite spot in the garden. From every side, in the dust and heat of the burning sun, came the clamour of the labouring folk as they walked and moved about.

Katja was snoring so peacefully under her white cambric handkerchief on our cool bench, the cherries shone so juicily and black on the plate, our dresses were so fresh and clean, the water in the jug shone with such rainbow lights in the sunshine, and I—I had such a sense of well-being. ‘What can I do?’ I thought. ‘Can I help being happy? But how can I share my happiness? How and to whom can I give my whole self, and all my happiness...?’

The sun had already set behind the top of the birch avenue, dust was settling on the field, the air became clearer and more luminous in the slanting light, the clouds had quite dispersed; from behind the trees the tops of three new hayricks could be seen on the threshing field, and the peasants climbed down from them; carts bumped along, obviously for the last time, peasant women with rakes on their shoulders and binding-twine in their belts were going home, singing loudly; but Sergei Mikhailovitch had still not come, although I had long ago seen him riding below the hill. Suddenly his figure appeared in the drive at the side

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from which I was least expecting him—he had skirted the ravine. His face was gay and radiant; he took off his hat and came towards me with quick steps. Seeing that Katia was asleep he bit his lips, shut his eyes and walked on tiptoe; I noticed at once that he was in that special mood of reasonless gaiety which I loved so much in him, and which we called ‘wild delight’. He was just like a school-boy freed from his studies; his whole person, from top to toe, radiated content, happiness and childish high spirits.

‘Good evening, young violet, how are you? Well?’ he said in a whisper, coming up to me and shaking my hand. ‘I’m in great form’, he said, in answer to my question. ‘I feel thirteen years old, and want to play horses and climb trees!’

‘In wild delight?’ I said, looking at his laughing eyes and feeling that this ‘wild delight’ was being communicated to me.

‘Yes’, he answered, winking and suppressing a smile, ‘only why hit Katerina Karlovna on the nose?’

I had not noticed that, as I was looking at him and went on waving the branch, I had knocked the handkerchief off Katia and was brushing her face with the leaves. I laughed.

‘And she’ll tell us that she wasn’t asleep’, I said in a whisper, as if so as not to wake Katia; but not at all for that reason: I simply enjoyed talking to him in a whisper.

He moved his lips, teasing me, as if I had spoken so quietly that it was impossible to hear a word. Catching sight of the plate of cherries, he seized it stealthily, and

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going up to Sonia under the lime tree, he sat down on her dolls. Sonia was annoyed at first, but he quickly made it up with her by racing her at eating cherries.

‘Would you like me to have some more brought?’ I said. ‘Or shall we go and get some ourselves?’

He took the plate, sat the dolls on it, and the three of us went to the cherry-cage. Sonia ran after us, laughing and holding on to his coat, trying to make him give back the dolls. He gave them to her, and became serious as he turned to me.

‘Of course you’re a violet!’ he said, still in a whisper, although there was no longer any fear of waking anyone. ‘As soon as I saw you, after all the dust and heat and work, I smelt a violet. And not a scented violet, you know, but that first, rather dark one which smells of snow and spring grass.’

‘Well, is everything going all right on your estate?’ I asked him, so as to cover the joyful confusion which his words had produced.

‘Splendidly! These people are splendid, everywhere. The more you know them, the more you love them.’

‘Yes’, I said. ‘Just before you came today I was watching their work from the garden, and suddenly I felt ashamed that they have to work, and I’m so fortunate, so . . .’

‘Don’t treat that lightly, my dear’, he interrupted me, suddenly looking into my eyes gravely, but tenderly. ‘That is something sacred. God forbid that you should boast about it!’

‘But I only say this to *you*.’

‘Mm, yes, I know. Well, how are the cherries?’

The cage was locked, and none of the gardeners were about (he had sent them all to work in the fields). Sonia ran off to fetch the key, but without waiting for her he climbed up one corner of the cage, lifted the net, and jumped on to the other side of the wall.

'Do you want some?' I heard him call. 'Give me the plate.'

'No, I want to pick them, too. I'll go for the key', I said. 'Sonia won't find it.'

But at the same time I wanted to see what he was doing there, how he looked, how he moved, when he supposed no one was looking at him. And then, at that moment, I simply did not want to lose sight of him for a minute. I ran on tiptoe through the nettles round the cage to the other side where the wall was lower, and standing on an empty tub so that the wall was at waist-level, I bent over into the cage. I looked round the interior of the cage, with its old, bent trees and their broad-toothed leaves under which juicy black cherries hung down stiffly and heavily, and pushing my head under the net, saw Sergci Mikhailovitch from under the crooked branch of an old cherry tree. He probably thought that I had gone away, and that no one could see him. Hatless, and with his eyes closed, he was sitting in the fork of an old cherry tree and was carefully rolling a lump of resin into a little pellet. Suddenly he shrugged his shoulders, opened his eyes and smiled, muttering something. The word he said and his smile were so unlike him that I began to feel ashamed of spying on him. It seemed to me that he was saying: 'Masha!' 'It's not possible', I thought. 'Dear Masha!' he

repeated, more quietly now and yet more tenderly. But this time I heard these two words quite distinctly. My heart began to beat fast, and an exciting, almost forbidden joy suddenly seized me, so that I gripped the wall with my hands to prevent myself falling and giving myself away. He heard me move, turned round in alarm, and suddenly looked down and blushed, went crimson like a child. He wanted to say something to me, but could not do so, and he blushed more and more. However, he smiled as he looked at me. I smiled, too. His whole face beamed with joy. This was no longer a fond old uncle and mentor, this man was my equal, loving and fearing me as I feared and loved him. We did not say anything, only looked at each other. But suddenly he frowned, his smile and the sparkle in his eyes vanished, and he turned to me coldly, once more like a father, as if we had been doing something wrong, and as if he had come to his senses and advised me to do the same.

‘Climb down now—you’ll hurt yourself’, he said. ‘And tidy your hair—just look what a sight you are!’

‘Why does he pretend? Why does he want to hurt me?’ I thought, vexed. And at the same instant I had an irresistible urge to disconcert him again and to test my power over him.

‘No, I want to pick the cherries myself’, I said, and catching on to the nearest branch, I swung my legs over the wall. He had no time to catch me before I jumped on the ground inside the cage.

‘What stupid things you do do!’ he said, blushing again and trying to cover his confusion with an air of

annoyance. 'You might have hurt yourself. And how are you going to get out of here?'

He was even more confused now than before, but this time his confusion no longer gave me pleasure but frightened me. I, too, became confused, and blushing and trying to avoid him, not knowing what to say, I started to pick cherries, although I had nowhere to put them. I reproached myself, regretted what I had done, was frightened, and felt that, by this act, I had ruined myself for ever in his eyes. We were both silent, and both felt uncomfortable. Sonia, running up with the key, got us out of this awkward situation. For a long time after this we did not speak to each other, but only to Sonia. When we got back to Katia, who assured us that she had not been asleep, but had heard everything, I ceased worrying, and he tried to regain his patronising and fatherly tone—but this tone was no longer very successful, and did not deceive me. I now vividly recalled a conversation which we had had a few days before.

Katia had been saying how much easier it was for a man to love and to express his love than it was for a woman.

'A man can say that he is in love, but a woman can't', she said.

'And I don't think a man should say that he loves someone, either; nor can he', he said.

'Why?' I asked.

'Because it will always be a lie. Is there really anything new in the fact that a man loves someone? As if, as soon as he says it, something clicks, bang—he is in

love. It is as if, as soon as he pronounces this word, something extraordinary must happen, there should be some omen, all the trumpets should sound at once. It seems to me', he continued, 'that people who solemnly pronounce the words: "I love you", either deceive themselves or, even worse, deceive others.'

'But then, how can a woman tell if someone loves her, if he doesn't say so?' asked Katia.

'That I don't know', he answered. 'Each person has his own way of saying it. And if there is feeling, then it will always express itself. When I read novels I always imagine the puzzled expression of Lieutenant Strelski or Alfred when they say "I love you, Elenora!", thinking that something extraordinary will happen; and nothing happens, either to her or to him; they have just the same eyes and noses, and everything is just as it was before.'

Even then, I felt that this jest contained something serious which concerned me; but Katia would not allow heroes in novels to be treated lightly.

'Paradoxes all the time!' she said. 'Now, tell me honestly, have you yourself never told a woman that you love her?'

'I've never said it, and I never went down on bended knee either!' he answered, laughing—'and I never will.'

'There is no need for him to tell me that he loves me', I thought now, vividly remembering this conversation. 'He loves me, I know. And all his efforts to appear indifferent won't convince me to the contrary.'

He did not say much to me all that evening, but in

each word he said to Katia or to Sonia, in every movement and look of his, I saw love, and never doubted it. I only pitied him and felt sorry that he should still find it necessary to conceal it and to feign indifference when it was all so obvious, and when it would have been so easy and simple to be quite impossibly happy. But the fact that I had jumped into the cage to him worried me, as if it had been a crime. I kept thinking that this would make him lose all respect for me, and that he was angry with me.

After tea I went to the piano, and he followed me.

'Play something. I haven't heard you for a long time', he said, catching me up in the drawing-room.

'That's just what I wanted to do . . . Sergei Mikhailovitch!' I said, suddenly looking at him straight in the eyes. 'You're not angry with me?'

'Why?' he asked.

'Because I disobeyed you after dinner', I said, and blushed.

He understood what I meant, shook his head and laughed. He looked as if he felt he ought to scold me, but did not feel the strength to do so.

'Let's forget about it, we're friends again', I said, sitting down at the piano.

'Of course!' he said.

The large, high room was lit only by two candles on the piano; the rest of the room was in semi-darkness. The light summer night looked in through the open windows. All was quiet but for the occasional squeak of Katia's footsteps in the dark drawing-room, and his horse, tied up outside the window, snorted and beat

the burdocks with its hooves. He was sitting behind me, so that I could not see him; but everywhere—in the semi-darkness of the room, in the sounds, in my own self—I felt his presence. His every look and movement, although I could not see them, were echoed in my heart. I played Mozart's sonata-fantasia, which he had brought for me and which I had studied with him and for him. I was not thinking at all of what I was playing, but I believe I played well and I was under the impression that he liked it. I felt the delight that he was experiencing and, without looking at him, I felt at my back his gaze directed on me. Without stopping the unconscious movement of my fingers, I quite involuntarily looked round at him. His head was silhouetted against the light background of the night. He was sitting, leaning his head on his hand, and was looking at me intently, his eyes shining. I smiled, seeing his look, and stopped playing. He smiled, too, and nodded reproachfully at the music to make me go on. When I had finished playing, the moon had become lighter and had risen higher and, apart from the weak light of the candles, another, silvery light came into the room through the windows and fell on the floor. Katia said that I should be ashamed of myself for stopping at the best place and that I had played badly; but he said that, on the contrary, I had never played so well as I had today; and he started to walk through the rooms—through the ball-room, into the dark drawing-room, and back again into the ball-room—looking at me each time and smiling. And I smiled too, and even felt like laughing for no reason at all, as if pleased at

something or other which had only just occurred. Every time he disappeared through the door I hugged Katia, who was standing next to me by the piano, and kissed her on my favourite spot—on her puffy neck under her chin; as soon as he returned I would make a seemingly serious face and could hardly keep back my laughter.

‘What has happened to her today?’ Katia said to him.

But he did not answer and only laughed at me: he knew what had happened to me.

‘Look what a night!’ he said from the drawing-room, stopping in front of the balcony door which was open on to the garden.

We came up to him; and it was indeed a night such as I have never seen since. The full moon stood over the house behind us, so that it was out of sight, and half the shadow of the roof, of the pillars and of the terrace awning lay aslant *en raccourci* on the sandy drive and on the lawn. The rest of the garden was light, and bathed in silver dew and moonlight. The shadows of the dahlias and their supports lay aslant one side of the wide flower-bed which, all light and cold, its uneven gravel glinting, receded into the mist and the distance. From beyond the trees could be seen the light roof of the greenhouse, and a growing mist was rising from the ravine. The lilac bushes were already somewhat bare, and the branches showed white; all the flowers were sprinkled with dew, and could be distinguished one from another. In the avenues light and shade were so blended that the avenues seemed no longer to be trees

and paths, but transparent houses, shimmering and trembling. To the right, in the shadow of the house, all was black, indifferent and fearful. But because of this the fantastically spread crown of the poplar tree stood out all the more brightly; strangely enough, it remained there, in the bright light above us, not far from the house, and had not flown off somewhere far away into the receding, bluish sky.

‘Let’s go out for a walk’, I said.

Katia agreed, but said that I must put on my galoshes.

‘I don’t need them, Katia’, I said. ‘Sergie Mikhailovitch will give me his arm.’

As if this could prevent me from getting my feet wet! But then this was quite understandable to all three of us, and not a bit odd. He never used to give me his arm, but now I took it myself and he did not think it strange. The three of us came down from the terrace. The whole of that world, the sky, the garden, the air were not those that I knew.

As I looked ahead down the avenue through which we were walking, I had the impression that we would not be able to go any further, that the world of the possible ended there, that all this must be fixed for ever in all its beauty. But we did move forward, and the magic world of beauty moved apart to let us through, and there too, it seemed, was our familiar garden, the trees and paths and dry leaves. And we really did walk along the paths, trod on the circle of light and shade, the dry leaves did rustle under our feet, and a fresh wind brushed my face. And it really was him, striding

evenly and quietly by my side, carefully holding my hand, and it really was Katia walking beside us with squacking boots. And it must have been the moon in the sky, shining on us through the motionless branches. . . .

But with every step the magic wall closed in behind and in front of us, and I ceased to believe that we could go any further, I ceased to believe in anything that existed.

‘Oh! A frog!’ said Katia.

‘Who says this, and why?’ I thought. But then I remembered that it was Katia, and that she was afraid of frogs, and I looked at the ground. A little frog jumped and stood stock-still in front of me, and I could see its little shadow on the light clay of the path.

‘You’re not afraid, are you?’ he said.

I looked at him. One lime tree was missing in the avenue at the spot where we were—I could see his face clearly. It was so fine and happy. . . .

He said: ‘You’re not afraid?’, but I heard him say: ‘I love you, my darling girl.’ ‘I love you, I love you!’ his look and his hand repeated; and the light and the shade and the air and everything repeated it too.

We went round the whole garden. Katia walked beside us taking short steps and breathing heavily because she was tired. She said it was time to go back, and I was sorry, so sorry for her, poor thing. ‘Why doesn’t she feel the same as we do?’—I thought—‘Why isn’t everyone young and happy, like this night, and like him and me?’

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We went home, but he did not leave for some time, although the cocks were crowing, everyone in the house was asleep, and his horse beat its hooves on the burdocks more and more often and snorted under the window. Katia did not remind us that it was late, and we sat up until three o'clock in the morning without ourselves realising it, and talking of the most trivial things. The cocks had already crowed for the third time and dawn was already breaking when he left. He said goodbye as usual, and did not say anything special; but I knew that from that day he was mine and that I would not lose him now. As soon as I had realised that I loved him, I told Katia everything. She was glad, and touched that I had told her about it, but she, poor thing, was able to fall asleep that night, whereas I walked up and down the terrace for a long time, went into the garden and down the same avenues that I had walked with him, recalling to mind every word and every movement. All that night I did not sleep, and for the first time in my life I saw the sunrise and the early morning; and never again have I seen such a night or such a morning. 'Only why doesn't he just tell me that he loves me?' I thought. 'Why does he think up all sorts of difficulties, and call himself an old man, when it is all so simple and wonderful? Why does he waste precious time which, perhaps, we shall never have again? He should say "I love you", say it in so many words, "I love you"; he should take my hand, bend his head over it and say "I love you". If only he'd blush and look embarrassed, and then I'd tell him everything. And I won't even say anything, just put my

arms around him and hold him to me, and weep. But what if I am wrong—suppose he doesn't love me?' I thought suddenly.

This feeling frightened me. God knows where it could lead me. I remembered his confusion—and my own—in the cherry-cage when I jumped down to him, and I was worried and felt heavy-hearted. Tears flowed down my cheeks, and I began to pray. And a strange thought, a hope, came to me and calmed me; I decided from that day to do penance and prepare myself to take Communion on my birthday, and on that day to become engaged to him.

Why or how this should happen, I had no idea, but from that very minute I believed in it and knew that it would be so. Day had already dawned and people were getting up when I returned to my room.

IV

IT WAS the fast of the Assumption, and so no one in the house was surprised at my intention of doing penance at that time.

He did not come to see me all that week, and I was not only not surprised or alarmed or angry with him but, on the contrary, was glad that he did not come, and did not expect him to arrive until my birthday. Every day during the course of the week I got up early and, while the horse was being harnessed for me, I would walk alone in the garden, going over in my

mind my sins of the day before, and thinking out what I should do that day so as to be satisfied with it, and avoid sinning. It then seemed so easy to me to be without sin. It seemed that all I had to do was just to make a little effort. The horses would arrive, I would get into the carriage either with Katia or with a maid, and we would drive the two miles to the church. Each time I entered the church I remembered to pray for everyone, 'entering therein in fear of God', and I would try to keep just this in mind as I went up the two steps overgrown with grass into the porch. At that time there would not be more than ten people—peasant women and servants—doing penance in the church; I tried to respond to their greetings with painstaking humility, and would go myself to the candle-box to take candles from the old churchwarden, an ex-soldier, and put them up—which seemed to me a heroic deed. Through the centre doors of the ikonostasis could be seen the altar-covering, which had been embroidered by Mamma, and over the ikonostasis stood two angels with stars which had seemed huge to me when I was a little girl, and a dove with a yellow halo which used to interest me then. In the choir the font was visible, dented with age, in which I had so often seen our servants' children being christened, and in which I had been christened myself. The old priest would come out in a chasuble which had been made out of my father's funeral pall, and he would conduct the service in exactly the same voice in which, ever since I could remember, Mass had been said in our house, and as it had been said at Sonia's christening, at the requiem for

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my father, and at my mother's funeral. The same quavering voice of the sacristan would be heard in the choir, and the same old woman, whom I always remembered seeing in church at every service, stood bent by the wall, looking with tears in her eyes at the ikon in the choir, pressing her clasped fingers to her faded shawl, and muttering something with her toothless mouth. No longer did all this merely arouse my interest, nor was it memories alone that made it dear to me; now all this was great and sacred in my eyes, and seemed full of deep meaning. I listened to every word of the prayers that were read and would try to answer them with feeling, and if I did not understand them I would ask God to enlighten me, or would invent my own prayers in place of those which I did not quite hear. While the prayer of repentance was being read I would remember my past, and that childish, innocent past seemed so black to me in comparison to the limpid state of my soul that I would weep, and be horrified at myself; but at the same time, I felt that all this would be forgiven, and that if I should be guilty of still greater sins, then repentance would be all the sweeter. When, at the end of the service, the priest would say: 'The blessing of the Lord be with you', it seemed to me that I instantly experienced a feeling of physical well-being which had been communicated to me. It was as if some sort of light and warmth suddenly filled my heart. The service would come to an end, the priest would come up to me and ask if and when he should come to us to say Vespers, but I would thank him, touched that he should want to do this—for me,

as I thought—and would tell him that I would walk or drive over to church myself.

‘You want to give yourself the trouble, do you?’ he would say.

And I would not know what to answer, so as not to commit the sin of pride.

When I went to Mass I always sent the horses back if Katia was not with me, and would go home alone on foot, bowing low with humility to everyone I met, and trying to find occasion to be of help, to give advice, to make a sacrifice of myself, to help lift a load, to nurse a child, to make way for people and to be splashed with mud. Once I heard the bailiff tell Katia that Semyon—a peasant—had come to ask for planks to make a coffin for his daughter and for a rouble for the wake, and how he had given it to him. ‘Are they really so poor?’ I asked. ‘Very poor, madam—they haven’t even any salt’, the bailiff answered. Something made my heart ache, and at the same time I was almost glad to hear what he said. I told Katia that I was going for a walk, and then ran upstairs, took all my money (it was not much, but it was all I had), made the sign of the cross, and went alone across the terrace and the garden to Semyon’s cottage, which was on the outskirts of the village. Unnoticed by anyone, I went and put the money on the window-sill and knocked on the window. Someone came out of the cottage and called out to me, the door squeaked, and I ran home like a criminal, shivering with cold and fear. Katia asked me where I had been and what was the matter with me, but I did not even understand what she was saying, and

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did not answer her. Suddenly it all seemed so petty and trivial to me. I shut myself up in my room and walked up and down it alone for a long time, not able to do anything or think of anything, nor able to take stock of my feelings. I pictured the joy of the whole family, the words they would use to discuss who had put the money there, and I was sorry I had not given them the money myself. I thought, too, of what Sergei Mikhailovitch would say if he were to find out about my action, and was glad that no one would ever find out about it. I was filled with such joy, I myself and everyone else seemed so wicked to me, and I thought of myself and of everyone with such meekness, that the thought of death came to me as a vision of happiness. I smiled and prayed and wept, and at that moment I loved everyone in the world and myself with passionate warmth. Between the services in church I read the Gospels, and the meaning of that book became increasingly clear to me, and the story of the Divine life simpler and more touching, and the depth of feeling and thought which I found in His teaching more awe-inspiring and impenetrable. On the other hand, how clear and simple everything seemed to me when, getting up from reading this book, I would once more contemplate and reflect on life surrounding me! It seemed so difficult to lead a bad life, and so simple to love everyone and to be loved. Everyone was so kind and gentle with me; even Sonia, to whom I continued to give lessons, was quite different, she tried to understand and please me and not to annoy me. Everyone behaved to me as I myself behaved. As I tried to call to

mind any enemies of whom I had to ask forgiveness before confession, I could only remember one girl, a neighbour that I had laughed at a year ago in front of guests, and who had ceased visiting us in consequence. I wrote her a letter in which I acknowledged my guilt and asked for her forgiveness. In her answering letter she herself asked forgiveness and forgave me. I wept for joy, reading these simple lines in which I then saw such deep and moving feeling. My nurse burst into tears when I asked her forgiveness. 'Why are they all so kind to me? What have I done to deserve such love?' I asked myself. Involuntarily I remembered Sergei Mikhailovitch, and thought of him for a long time. I could not do otherwise, and never even considered it as a sin. But now I thought of him not at all as I had done on that night when, for the first time, I realised that I loved him; I thought of him now as I thought of myself, unconsciously linking him with every thought about my own future. His overwhelming influence, which I experienced in his presence, completely disappeared in my imagination. I felt that I was now his equal and, from the heights of my spiritual mood, I completely understood him. Everything in him which before had seemed strange was now clear to me. It was only now that I understood why he said that happiness only came from living for others, and I now entirely agreed with him. I felt that, together, we would be so infinitely and serenely happy. And what came to my mind was neither journeys abroad, nor Society, nor social glitter, but an entirely different, quiet family life in the country, with constant self-sacrifice, with

constant love for each other, and with the constant consciousness of an ever gentle and helping Providence.

I took Communion, as I had intended, on my birthday. That day, when I returned from church, I was filled with such complete happiness that I was afraid of life, afraid of every impression, of anything which could destroy this happiness. However, no sooner had we got out of the carriage at the porch, than a familiar cabriolet thundered over the bridge, and I saw Sergei Mikhailovitch. He wished me many happy returns of the day, and we went into the drawing-room together. Never since I had known him had I been so calm and self-possessed in his presence as I was that morning. I felt that there was a whole new world within me which he did not understand, and which was above him. Nor did I feel the slightest shyness with him. He must have understood the reason for this, and he was especially tender and gentle and devoutly respectful to me. I wanted to go to the piano, but he locked it and hid the key in his pocket.

'Don't spoil your mood', he said. 'You are now filled with music which is better than any in the world.'

I was grateful to him for this, and at the same time a little annoyed that he had too easily and clearly understood all that was in my heart, which should have been a secret from everyone.

At dinner he said that he had come to wish me many happy returns of the day and also, at the same time, to say goodbye, as he was going to Moscow the next day. As he was saying this he was looking at Katia; but then he glanced at me, and I saw that he was afraid of

seeing me look concerned. But I was neither surprised nor alarmed, and did not even ask him if he would be away long. I had known that he would say this, and I knew that he would not go away. How I knew this I cannot now explain to myself, but on that memorable day I felt that I knew everything—what had been, and what was to be. It was as if I was in a happy dream in which it seemed that everything in the future had already happened, and that I had known about it for a long time, and yet I felt that it would happen again, and I knew that it would happen.

He wanted to leave immediately after dinner, but Katia, who was tired after Mass, retired to lie down for a while, and he had to wait for her to wake up in order to take his leave of her. It was sunny in the ball-room, and we went out on the terrace. As soon as we sat down I began with complete calm to say that which was to decide the fate of my love. I began to speak not a minute before or after, but at the very instant we sat down and before anything had been said, so that the conversation had, as yet, no tone or character whatsoever which might have prevented my saying what I wanted to say. I cannot understand myself how I was able to muster so much calmness, such determination and accuracy of expression. It was as if something independent of my will, rather than myself, was speaking within me. He sat opposite me, leaning on the balustrade and plucking the leaves off a branch of lilac which he had pulled towards him. When I began to speak he let go the branch and leaned his head on his hand. It could have been the attitude either of a man who was

completely calm, or of someone feeling extremely nervous.

'Why are you going away?' I asked, significantly pausing and looking straight at him.

He did not answer for a moment.

'Business!' he said, and looked down.

I realised how difficult it was for him to lie to me, especially in answer to a question which had been put so frankly.

'Listen', I said. 'You know what this day means to me. It's a very important day for many reasons. If I ask you such a question, it is not merely to show my interest (you know how ~~cares~~ I am to you, and how much I love you). I ask you because I must know. Why are you going away?'

'It's very difficult for me to tell you truthfully why I am going away', he said. 'I have thought about you a good deal this week, and about myself, and I have decided that I must go away. You understand why, and if you love me you won't ask me.' He brushed his forehead with his hand and covered his eyes. 'It's very hard for me—and clear to you.'

My heart began to beat fast.

'I don't understand', I said. 'I *can't*. You tell me, for God's sake, for the sake of today, tell me. I can listen to it all calmly', I said.

He changed his position, looked at me, and pulled the branch towards him again.

'All right, then', he said, pausing a little, and in a voice which he tried in vain to make hard. 'Although it's silly, and impossible to put it into words, although

it's very painful for me, I'll try to explain to you', he added, frowning as if from physical pain.

'Well?' I said.

'Imagine that there was a certain Mr A. Imagine', he said, 'that he was old and spent; and a certain Miss B., young, happy, who as yet did not know anyone or anything. For various family reasons he loved her as a daughter, and was not afraid of loving her in any other way.'

He paused, but I did not interrupt him.

'But he forgot that B. was so young that life for her was still a plaything', he suddenly went on, quickly and resolutely, without looking at me, 'and that it would be easy to love her in a different way, and that that would be fun for her. And he was mistaken, and suddenly became conscious of another feeling, as heavy as repentance, creeping into his heart, and was frightened. He was afraid that their former friendly relationship would be destroyed, and decided to go away before that should happen.' As he was saying this he began wiping his eyes, as if carelessly, with his hand, and closed them.

'But why was he afraid of loving her differently?' I said in a barely audible whisper and keeping my emotions under control, my voice was even, but to him it probably appeared to have a bantering tone. He answered as if he had taken offence.

'You're young', he said, 'I am not young. You want to play, but I want something else. Play, but not with me, or I will take you seriously and be unhappy, and you will feel ashamed. That's what A. said', he added,

'that's all nonsense, anyway; but you understand why I am going away. Don't let's talk about it any more—please!'

'Yes! Yes! We will talk about it', I said, and the tears in my throat made my voice tremble. 'Did he love her, or not?'

He did not answer.

'But if he did not love her; why did he play with her, as if she was a child?' I said.

'Oh, yes, A. was to blame', he answered, hurriedly interrupting me, 'but it was all finished, and they parted . . . friends.'

'But that's dreadful! Is there really no other ending?' I scarcely managed to say, and was frightened by what I had said.

'Yes, there is', he said, uncovering his face, which showed signs of emotion, and looking straight at me. 'There are two different endings. Only for goodness' sake don't interrupt, and take in calmly what I have to say. Some say', he began, getting up and painfully smiling a forced smile, 'some say that A. went out of his mind, fell madly in love with B. and told her so . . . But she only laughed. She took it as a joke, but for him life itself was at stake.'

I started, and wanted to interrupt him to say that he should not presume to speak for me, but he stopped me, putting his hand on mine.

'Wait a moment', he said, with a trembling voice. 'Others say that she took pity on him, and that she imagined, poor thing, without ever having met anyone else, that she could really love him—and she

agreed to become his wife. And he was crazy and believed her—believed that his whole life would begin anew; but she herself realised that she had deceived him, and that he had deceived her. . . . Don't let's talk about it any more', he concluded, suddenly unable to continue, and he began to pace up and down in front of me, in silence.

He had said: 'Don't let's talk about it', but I saw that he was waiting for my words with all his being. I wanted to speak, but could not; something was pressing on my heart. I looked at him: he was pale, and his lower lip was trembling. I felt sorry for him. Making an effort and breaking the silence that was fettering me, I began to speak in a quiet, even voice which I feared would break at any moment.

'And the third ending . . .' I said, and stopped; but he remained silent. 'The third ending is that he did not love her, but hurt her, hurt her and thought it right, went away and was even proud of something. To you it's a joke—to you, but not to me. I loved you from the first day, *loved* you', I repeated, and at the word 'loved' my voice changed involuntarily from a quiet, even one into a wild shriek which frightened me myself.

He stood before me, pale, his lower lip trembling more and more, while two tears rolled down his cheeks.

'That's very wrong', I almost shouted, feeling that angry, unshed tears were stifling me. 'Why do you do it?' I went on, and stood up to leave him.

But he did not let me. His head lay on my knees,

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his lips kissed my trembling hands, and his tears moistened them.

‘Oh God, if only I had known!’ he said.

‘Why did you do it—why?’ I still repeated, but in my heart there was happiness—the happiness that had almost escaped me, but that had now returned again.

Five minutes later Sonia was running upstairs to Katia, and shouting throughout the whole house that Masha wanted to marry Sergei Mikhailovitch.

V

THERE was no reason for postponing our marriage, and neither of us wished to do so. Katia, it is true, would have liked to go to Moscow and buy or order things for a trousseau, and his mother tried to insist that, before he married, he should get a new carriage and furniture, and have all the rooms in the house newly-papered; but we both insisted—successfully—that if it was really so necessary all this should be done afterwards, and that we should marry a fortnight after my birthday, without a trousseau, without guests, without ushers or a reception or champagne and all the other conventional paraphernalia of weddings. He told me how displeased his mother was that the wedding would be without music, without mountains of trunks, and without the whole house being redecorated—unlike her wedding, which had cost thirty thousand roubles—and how, while going through the trunks in the box-room, she had been

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consulting gravely and surreptitiously with Maryoushka the housekeeper, so that he would not know, about some carpets and curtains and trays absolutely essential to our happiness. On my side Katia was doing the same with Nanny Kuzminishna, and the matter could not be treated lightly in her presence. She was absolutely convinced that when we discussed our future together we were just being sentimental and frivolous, as was characteristic of people in such a state, but that, in fact, our future happiness would depend entirely on the correct cut and stitching of chemises, and the hemming of tablecloths and table-napkins. Several times each day secret information was exchanged between Pokrovskoye and Nikolskoye as to what was being prepared; and although outwardly Katia and his mother seemed to be on the tenderest of terms, one could already feel that relations between them were based on a hostile, even if extremely fine diplomacy. Tatiana Semyonovna, his mother, whom I now got to know better, was a dour, strict housewife, and a lady of the old school. He loved her not only as a son, in duty bound, but as a man, by inclination, and he considered her the best, most intelligent, kindest and most affectionate woman in the world. Tatiana Semyonovna was always kind to us and especially to me, and was pleased that her son was getting married; but when I went to see her as a fiancée I felt that she wanted to make me feel that, as a match for her son, I could be better, and that no harm would be done if I were always to remember this. And I quite understood and agreed with her.

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We saw each other every day during this last fortnight. He used to come to dinner and would stay on till midnight. But although he said that without me he could not live—and I knew that he was speaking the truth—he never spent the whole day with me, but tried to carry on with his work as usual. On the face of it our relationship remained the same as before, right up to the very wedding; we continued to say *vous* to each other, he did not even kiss my hand, nor did he seek opportunities for remaining alone with me—indeed, he even avoided them. It was as if he was afraid to succumb to all the tenderness which was in him, which was too great and was even harmful. I do not know which of us changed, but I now felt myself to be completely his equal. I now no longer found in him the pretence of simplicity which I had previously disliked, and often I was delighted to see before me, instead of a man inspiring awe and respect, a child, meek and lost with happiness. ‘So that’s all there ever was in him!’ I would often think. ‘He’s just the same sort of person as I am—no better.’ I felt that I now saw him as he really was, and that I knew him completely; and all that I was discovering in him was so simple, and so much in tune with my own feelings. Even his plans for our future life together were the same as my own, only clearer and better expressed.

The weather was bad then, and we spent most of our time indoors. Our best and most heart-to-heart conversations took place in the corner behind the piano and the little window. The dark window reflected the light of the candles and drew it near to us,

raindrops would occasionally beat against the shiny glass and run down it. Outside, rain pattered on the roof and splashed in the pool under the water-pipe, the damp came in through the window; and somehow our corner seemed all the lighter and warmer and more cheerful.

‘You know, I’ve been wanting to tell you something for a long time’, he said once, when we were sitting up late by ourselves in this corner. ‘I was thinking about it while you were playing the piano.’

‘Don’t say a word. I know everything’, I said.

‘All right, we won’t talk about it.’

‘No, do tell me. What?’ I asked.

‘Well, you remember when I told you that story about A. and B.?’

‘As if I could ever forget that stupid story! It’s a good thing it ended as it did. . . .’

‘Yes, a little longer, and I would have destroyed my own happiness. You saved me. But the most important thing is that I lied to you then, and I’m ashamed of it, and want to tell you now all I had on my mind.’

‘Oh! Please don’t!’

‘Don’t be nervous’, he said, smiling. ‘I only want to justify myself. When I started to speak I wanted to reason things out.’

‘Why reason things out?’ I said. ‘One never should.’

‘Yes, my reasoning was at fault. After all my disillusionments and mistakes in life, when I came to the country this year I said to myself so firmly that, as far as I was concerned, love was finished with, and that my only remaining obligation was that of finishing my

span of life, that for a long time I didn't realise what kind of a feeling I had for you, and where it might lead me. I hoped, and yet I didn't hope: sometimes it seemed to me that you were just flirting, sometimes I believed in you, and I didn't know myself what I should do. But after that evening, you remember, when we walked in the garden at night, I was afraid: my happiness seemed too great and impossible. And what would have happened if I had allowed myself to hope in vain? But of course I only thought about myself, because I'm a horrid egoist.'

He paused, and looked at me.

'However, what I said then wasn't really entirely nonsense. It was both right and proper for me to be afraid. I am taking so much from you, and can give you so little. You're still a child, you're a bud which has not opened yet, you love for the first time; whereas I . . .'

'Yes, tell me truthfully', I said, but suddenly I was afraid of his answer. 'No, better not', I added.

'Have I ever loved anyone before? Is that what you mean?' he said, guessing my thought immediately. 'I can tell you that. No, I have never been in love. Never anything approaching this feeling. . . .' But suddenly it seemed as if some painful memory flashed across his mind. 'No, and in this too I need your heart to have the right to love you', he said sadly. 'Well, then, didn't I have to think things out before telling you that I loved you? What am I giving you? Love—that's true enough.'

'Is that so little?' I said, looking into his eyes.

‘It’s little, my dear, for you it’s little’, he went on. ‘You have beauty and youth! I often don’t sleep at night now from sheer happiness, thinking how we shall live, together. I have lived through a great deal, and I think I have found what is needed for happiness. A quiet, secluded life in our country backwater, with the possibility of doing good to people whom it is easy to do good to because they are not used to it; then work—work which one thinks is useful, then rest, nature, books, music, love for the person who is close to you—that’s my idea of happiness. I never dreamed of anything better. And now, on top of all this, I get a friend like you, a family perhaps, and everything that a man can desire.’

‘Yes’, I said.

‘For me, whose youth is over, that is, but not for you’, he went on. ‘You haven’t lived yet. You may want to look for happiness elsewhere perhaps, and perhaps it is elsewhere that you will find it. You think that this is happiness now because you love me.’

‘No, all I have ever wanted and loved was a quiet family life’, I said. ‘You’re only putting my thoughts into words.’

He smiled.

‘It only seems like that to you, my dear. But such a life doesn’t hold much for you. You have beauty and youth’, he repeated, thoughtfully.

But I was annoyed that he did not believe me, and that he seemed to reproach me for my beauty and youth.

‘What do you love me for, then?’ I said, crossly. ‘For my youth, or for myself?’

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'I don't know, but I love you', he answered, and as he looked at me his gaze was steady and magnetic.

I did not answer, and looked involuntarily ~~into~~ his eyes. Suddenly something strange happened to me: first I ceased to see all my surroundings, then his face disappeared and only his eyes seemed to shine immediately in front of mine; then I felt that those eyes were inside me and everything became blurred, I could not see anything and had to close my eyes tightly in order to tear myself away from the feeling of delight and fear which this gaze produced in me. . . .

The weather cleared up on the eve of the wedding. After the summer rains the first cold and bright autumn evening broke through. Everything was wet, cold and clear, and in the garden the spaciousness, the motley colours and bareness of autumn were apparent for the first time. The sky was clear, cold and pale. I went to bed happy with the thought that tomorrow, our wedding-day, the weather would be fine. The next day I awoke at sunrise, and the thought that today . . . somehow frightened and surprised me. I went out into the garden. The sun had just risen, and shone in patches through the falling, yellowing leaves of the lime-avenue. The path was strewn with rustling leaves. The bright clusters of wrinkled rowanberries reddened on the branches which were covered with rare shrivelled leaves killed by frost, the dahlias had withered and turned black. For the first time frost lay silver on the pale green grass and on the broken burdocks around the house. In the clear, cold sky there was not—and could not be—a single cloud.

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‘Is it really today?’ I asked myself, not believing my happiness. ‘Will I really wake up tomorrow no longer here, but in Nikolskoye, in a strange house with pillars? Will I really no longer wait for him and go to meet him, and no longer talk to Katia about him in the evenings and at night? No longer sit with him at the piano in the ball-room at Pokrovskoye? No longer see him off, and worry about him on dark nights?’ Then I would remember that he had said yesterday he had come for the last time, and that Katia had made me try on my wedding-dress, saying: ‘For tomorrow’— and I would believe it all for a moment, and then begin to doubt again. ‘Will I really, from this very day, live there with my mother-in-law, without Nadyoja, without old Grigori, without Katia? Will I really not kiss Nurse good-night any more, and hear her say from long habit “Goodnight, Miss”, as she makes the sign of the cross over me? Will I really no longer give lessons to Sonia and play with her, and knock on the wall to her in the morning and hear her resounding laughter? Will I really today become a stranger to myself, and is a new life, the realisation of my hopes and wishes, opening up before me? Is it really for ever, this new life?’ I waited for him impatiently, for I felt depressed alone with these thoughts. He arrived early, and it was only when he was with me that I fully believed that I would that day become his wife, and that this thought ceased to be terrifying to me.

Before dinner we went to our church for a commemoration service for my father.

‘If only he were alive now!’ I thought, as we were

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walking home, and I was silently leaning on the arm of the man who had been his best friend. During the prayers, resting my forehead on the cold stone floor of the chapel, I saw my father so clearly in my imagination and believed so strongly that his spirit understood me and blessed my choice, that it seemed to me as if it was hovering over us and I felt his blessing on me. Memories and hopes and happiness and sadness blended within me into one solemn and pleasant feeling which was matched by the still, fresh air, the silence, the bareness of the fields, and the pale sky from which bright but weak rays fell on everything, trying to burn my cheeks. It seemed to me that the man walking by my side understood and shared my feeling. He walked slowly and in silence, and on his face, which I looked at from time to time, I perceived the same solemn sadness mixed with joy which was in nature and in my heart.

Suddenly he turned to me; I saw that he wanted to say something. The question: 'What if he should speak of something else, and not of what I am thinking?' came into my head. But he spoke of my father, without even naming him.

'Once he said to me, without meaning it seriously: "Marry my Masha!"' he said.

'How happy he would be now', I said, squeezing tighter the hand that was holding mine.

'Yes, you were still a child', he went on, looking into my eyes. 'I used to kiss those eyes then, and loved them only because they were like his, and never thought that they would be so dear to me for their own sake. I used to call you "Masha" then.'

'Do say *tu* to me', I said.

'I just wanted to say *tu* to you', he said. 'It seems to me only now that you are entirely mine.' And his calm and happy magnetic gaze fell on me.

We went on walking quietly along the untrodden field path through the trampled, beaten stubble; and we heard only our own footsteps and voices. On one side, stretching away across the ravine to a distant bare copse, lay the brownish stubble through which, some distance away, a peasant was soundlessly cutting out with his plough a gradually widening black strip. A drove of horses, scattered beneath the hill, seemed quite near. On the other side and ahead of us, right up to the garden and our house visible beyond it, lay a field sown to winter corn, black now that the frost had melted, and yet already streaked with green in places. A sun without warmth shone on everything, long fibrous spider-webs lay everywhere. They flew in the air around us and lay on the stubble which was withering because of frost, they fell in our eyes, on our hair, on our clothes. When we spoke our voices sounded and were arrested above us in the still air, as if only we alone existed in the midst of the whole world, alone under this blue vault in which the weak sun was shining and occasionally flaring up and shimmering.

I too wanted to say *tu* to him, but I felt shy.

'Why do you walk so fast?' I said, using the *tu* very quickly, almost in a whisper, and blushed in spite of myself.

He walked more slowly, and looked at me even more tenderly, gaily and happily.

When we reached home his mother and some guests with whom we had been unable to dispense, were already there, and I was not alone with him again until the very moment when we left the church and got into the carriage to drive to Nikolskoye.

The church was almost empty; out of the corner of my eye I saw only his mother, standing erect on the little carpet by the choir, Katia, wearing a black lace cap with lilac-coloured ribbons, and with tears rolling down her checks, and two or three servants looking at me with curiosity. I did not look at him, but felt his presence there beside me. I listened to the words of the prayers and repeated them, but there was no response in my heart. I could not pray, and looked dully at the ikons, at the candles, at the embroidered cross of the chasuble on the priest's back, at the ikonostasis, at the window of the church—and did not understand anything. I felt only that something unusual was being performed over me. When the priest turned towards us with the cross, congratulated us and said that he had christened me, and that now it had been God's will that he should marry me, when Katia and his mother kissed us, and Grigori's voice was heard calling for the carriage, I was surprised and alarmed that it was all over already, and that nothing extraordinary corresponding to the mystery just performed over me had happened within me. We kissed each other, and that kiss was so strange, and alien to our feelings. 'So that's all there is to it', I thought. We went out into the porch, the wheels echoed hollowly under the vault of the church, the smell of fresh air struck our faces, he

put on his hat and helped me into the carriage. From the carriage window I saw a frosty, ringed moon. He sat down beside me, and shut the door behind him. Something stabbed my heart. The sureness with which he did this somehow seemed offensive to me. Katia's voice called out to me to cover my head, the wheels rattled over the stones, then on the soft road, and we had gone. Squeezing myself into the corner, I looked out of the window at the distant light fields, and at the road disappearing in the cold moonshine. And, without looking at him, I felt him there beside me. 'What, is that all that this moment, from which I expected so much, has given me?' I thought, and somehow I felt that it was humiliating and offensive to be sitting there alone, so close to him. I turned towards him with the intention of saying something. But the words would not come, as if I no longer had my former feeling of tenderness, but in its stead a feeling of offence and fear.

'Till this minute I couldn't believe it was possible', he quietly answered my look.

'Yes, but for some reason I'm frightened', I said.

'You're frightened of me, my dear?' he said, taking my hand and bending his head over it.

My hand lay lifeless in his, and my heart began to ache from coldness.

'Yes', I whispered.

But at that very moment my heart suddenly began to beat faster, my hand trembled and pressed his hand, I began to feel hot, my eyes sought his in the dusk, and I suddenly felt that I was not afraid of him—that this

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fear was love, a new kind of love, a tenderer and stronger love than before. I felt that I was entirely his and that I rejoiced in his power over me.

P A R T T W O

VI

DAYS, weeks, two months of secluded country life passed — imperceptibly, it seemed at the time; and yet the feelings, emotions and happiness of those two months were enough to fill a lifetime. Our dreams of life in the country turned out quite differently to what we had expected. But our life was no worse than our dreams. There was none of the unremitting toil, the fulfilment of duty, the self-sacrifice and living for others which I had imagined when I was engaged; there was, on the contrary, only a selfish feeling of love for each other, the desire to be loved, unreasoning, constant gaiety, and oblivion to everything else in the world. Sometimes, it is true, he would go off and work in his study, sometimes he would go into town on business or go round the estate; but I saw what an effort it cost him to tear himself away from me. He would himself admit afterwards that in my absence everything in the world seemed such sheer nonsense that he could not understand how one could have anything to do with it. I felt the same. My time was taken up with reading

and music, with his mother and the school; but I did all this only because each of those tasks was connected with him and would gain his approval; but whenever anything I was doing had no connection with him I would lose interest in it, and it would seem odd to me to think that anything existed in the world apart from him. Perhaps it was wrong and selfish of me to feel like that, but it made me happy, and I felt on top of the world. He was the only man to exist for me, and I thought him the finest and most infallible person in the world; and therefore all I could live for in the world was him, my sole aim was to appear in his eyes such as he believed me to be. He too thought that I was the foremost and most perfect woman in the world, endowed with every possible virtue; and I tried to be just such a woman in the eyes of the foremost and best man in the whole world.

Once he came into my room as I was saying my prayers. I looked round at him and went on praying. He sat down at the table so as not to disturb me, and opened a book. But I felt that he was looking at me, and turned my head. He smiled. I laughed and could not go on praying.

‘Have you said your prayers already?’ I asked.

‘Yes. You go on, I’ll go away.’

‘You do say your prayers, I hope?’

He did not answer, and wanted to leave me, but I stopped him.

‘Darling, please, do read my prayers with me, for my sake.’ He came and stood beside me; with his arms hanging awkwardly at his sides, and with a serious

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expression on his face, faltering, he began to read. Occasionally he would turn towards me, looking for approval and help in my face.

When he had finished I laughed, and hugged him.

'It's all your fault, all your fault! I feel exactly as if I was ten years old again', he said, blushing and kissing my hands.

Ours was one of those old country houses in which several generations of relatives had lived, loving and respecting one another. There was an odour of good, honest family memories which, as soon as I entered the house, suddenly somehow became my memories too. The house was furnished and the routine set by Tatiana Semyonovna in the old-fashioned way. It could not be said that everything was elegant and beautiful; but, from the servants down to the furniture and food, there was plenty of everything, and it was all tidy, solid, neat, and inspired respect. In the drawing-room the furniture and portraits were symmetrically arranged, as were the carpets and rugs on the floor. There was an old grand piano in the morning-room, two tallboys of different styles, sofas, and little tables inlaid with brass. In my study, which Tatiana Semyonovna had furnished herself, stood the very best furniture of different centuries and styles and, amongst other things, an old cheval-glass which at first I simply could not look at without embarrassment, but which subsequently became as dear as an old friend to me. Tatiana Semyonovna could not be heard, but everything in the house went like clockwork, in spite of many superfluous servants. But all the servants—wearing soft, heelless

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boots because Tatiana Semyonovna considered squeaking soles and clattering heels the most disagreeable things in the world—all the servants seemed proud of their calling, trembled in front of their old mistress, looked at me and at my husband with patronising affection, and seemed to perform their tasks with particular pleasure. Regularly every Saturday the floors of the house were washed and the carpets beaten, on the first of each month Mass was said in the house and water consecrated, and a banquet was given for the whole neighbourhood on every name-day—on Tatiana Semyonovna's, on her son's, (and on my own for the first time that autumn). All this had gone on unchanged ever since Tatiana Semyonovna could remember. My husband did not interfere with the domestic arrangements, and dealt only with farming and the peasants; and this gave him a great deal of work. Even in the winter he got up very early, and was out by the time I woke up. He usually came back to tea, which we had by ourselves; and it was then, after all the trouble and difficulties occasioned by his work, that he was almost always in that particularly gay frame of mind which we called 'wild delight'. I often insisted that he should tell me what he had done in the morning, and he used to tell me such nonsense that we would die of laughter; sometimes I insisted on a serious account and he, restraining a smile, would give it me. I would look at his eyes, his moving lips, and not understand a word, but was simply glad to see him and to hear his voice.

'Well, what did I say? Repeat it', he would ask. But

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I could not repeat a word. It seemed so funny that *he* should be telling *me*, not about himself and myself, but about something else. As if I cared what was going on! It was only much later that I began to understand his preoccupations a little, and to take an interest in them. Tatiana Semyonovna did not appear before dinner, had tea alone, and only greeted us through ambassadors. In our peculiar extravagantly happy little world, this voice from her staid and orderly corner of it sounded so odd that I often could not contain myself, and would only laugh in reply to the maid who, with her hands folded, would report in measured tones: 'Tatiana Semyonovna has ordered me to enquire if you are rested after yesterday's walk. And I am to tell you that her side ached all night, and that some silly dog barked outside and would not let her rest. And I am to ask you how you liked the cake this morning. Tatiana Semyonovna would have you note that it was not Taras baked them this morning, but Nikolasha, and for the first time, just to give him a trial; and, she said, he didn't do it badly at all, especially the pretzels, but the rusks were overdone.'

We were not much together before dinner. I played the piano or read alone, he read or went out again: but at dinner-time, which was at four o'clock, we assembled in the drawing-room, his mother sailed out of her room, and the distressed gentle-women, roving souls of whom there were always two or three living in the house, would appear. Regularly every day, my husband would give his arm to his mother to take her in to dinner as he used to, but she insisted that he should

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give me the other arm, and regularly every day we got in a crowd and muddle at the door. At dinner, too, it was his mother who presided, and a decorously reasonable and somewhat solemn conversation was carried on. The simple words of my husband and myself agreeably destroyed the solemnity of these dinner sessions. Sometimes mother and son would argue together and tease each other; I particularly loved this banter and their arguments because it was in them that the tender and firm love linking mother and son was most strongly expressed. After dinner Mainan sat in a large armchair in the drawing-room and would grind tobacco or slit the pages of newly-arrived books, while we read aloud or went into the morning-room to the piano. At that time we read together a great deal, but music was our favourite and greatest pleasure, striking new chords each time in our hearts and making us, as it were, discover each other anew. When I played his favourite pieces he would sit on a sofa some way off where I could scarcely see him and, too embarrassed to show it, would try to hide the impression which the music made on him; but I could often get up from the piano when he was least expecting it, come up to him and try to catch the traces of emotion on his face, the unnatural glitter and moisture in his eyes, which he would try, in vain, to hide from me. His mother often wanted to have a look at us in the morning-room, but she was probably afraid to embarrass us, and she would sometimes walk through the morning-room pretending not to look at us, and with a pseudo-serious and indifferent expression on her face; but I knew that she

had no reason for going to her room and coming back so quickly. I poured out tea in the evenings in the large drawing-room, and once more the whole household would gather round the table.

For a long time that solemn session, with the samovar like a symbol of office and the distribution of cups and glasses, made me nervous. I felt that I was not yet worthy of this honour, and that I was too young and frivolous to turn the tap of such a large samovar and to put a glass on Nikita's tray, saying 'For Pyotr Ivanovich and Maria Minichna', to ask 'With sugar?' and to leave lumps of sugar for the nurse and other old retainers. 'Splendid, splendid', my husband would frequently say, 'Just like a grown-up'—and this would make me all the more nervous.

After tea Maman would play patience, or listen to Maria Minichna's fortune-telling; then she would kiss us and make the sign of the cross over us both, and we would retire to our rooms. Mostly, however, we would sit up together till after midnight, and this was the best and most pleasant time of the day. He would tell me about his past life, we would make plans, sometimes we philosophised, and we would try to talk as quietly as possible so as not to be overheard upstairs and reported to Tatiana Semyonovna, who insisted that we should go to bed early. Sometimes, feeling hungry, we would creep to the larder and get a cold supper through the good offices of Nikita, and would eat it in my study by the light of a single candle. We lived like strangers in the big old house, in which everything was dominated by the stern spirit of the

past and of Tatiana Semyonovna. Not she alone, but the servants, the old housemaids, the furniture, the pictures—all inspired me with respect, with a certain amount of awe, and also with the consciousness that he and I were not quite in our right place, that we had to be very careful and considerate in our manner of living. Looking back on it now, I can see that much in our house was inconvenient and difficult—both the binding, unchanging order, and the countless idle and inquisitive servants; but at that time this very restriction put all the more life into our love. He never showed—and neither, of course, did I—that there was anything that he did not like. On the contrary, he even somehow recoiled from anything bad. My mother-in-law's footman, Dimitri Sidorov, who was a great pipe-smoker, used to go regularly every day after dinner, when we were in the morning-room, into my husband's study to take his tobacco from the drawer; and it was a sight to see with what hilarious alarm Sergei Mikhailovitch would tiptoe towards me, shaking his finger, winking and pointing at Dimitri Sidorov, who had no idea that anyone was watching him. And when Dimitri Sidorov would go away, delight at his success making him quite oblivious to us, my husband would kiss my hand and tell me, as on every other occasion, that I was charming. At times I disliked this calmness of his, his all-forgiveness and almost indifference to everything; I did not notice that I was the same myself, and considered it to be weakness on his part. 'Just like a child who doesn't dare to show his will', I thought.

'Ah, my dear', he once replied, when I had told him

that his weakness surprised me. 'Can one really feel annoyed about anything, when one is as happy as I am? It is easier to yield than to impose one's will; I reached that conclusion long ago. There's no situation in which it's impossible to be happy—and we are so happy together! I can't be angry; nothing seems bad to me now, things seem only pitiful or amusing. The main thing to remember is—*le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*. And would you believe it . . . when I hear a bell, get a letter, simply when I wake up, I am terrified—terrified that one must live, that something will be changed, whereas nothing can be better than the present.'

I believed him, but did not understand him; I was happy, but felt that everything should be just like that and in no way different, and that it should always be like that for everyone; and I felt too that there existed, somewhere, another happiness—not greater, perhaps, but different.

Thus two months went by, winter came with its cold and snowstorms and, even though I had him with me, I was beginning to feel that life was repeating itself, and that neither of us had anything new to give—but that we seemed rather to be going back to things as they had been before. He now spent more time without me attending to business than he had before, and I again began to feel that there was some special world within him to which he did not want to admit me. His perpetual calmness irritated me. I loved him no less than before, and was no less happy in his love than I had been; but my love stood still and ceased to

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grow, and apart from love some new and restless feeling began to creep into my heart. Once I had experienced the happiness of falling in love with him I could not rest content with affection. I wanted movement, not the calm flow of life. I wanted emotion, danger, and self-sacrifice for the sake of feeling. I had a superabundance of strength which found no outlet in our quiet life. I suffered from bouts of nostalgia, which I tried to hide from him as if it was something bad, and transports of violent tenderness and hilarity which frightened him. He noticed my condition even before I did myself, and proposed that we should move to town; but I asked him not to do so, not to change our way of life, not to destroy our happiness. And I really was happy; but I was tormented by the fact that this happiness did not cost me any effort or sacrifice, while my capacity for effort and sacrifice consumed me. I loved him, and saw that I meant everything to him; but I wanted everyone to see our love, I wanted some obstacle to our love so that I could love him in spite of it. My mind and even my feelings were engaged, but there was a different feeling of youth, of the necessity for movement, which found no satisfaction in our quiet life. Why had he told me that we could move to town whenever I wanted to? Had he not told me this, perhaps I would have understood that the feeling oppressing me was pernicious nonsense, was my own fault, that the very sacrifice which I was seeking was there in front of me—in the suppression of that feeling. The thought that I could only save myself from my longings by moving to town, involuntarily came into

my head, yet at the same time I was ashamed and sorry to drag him away from everything he loved. But time passed, snow rose higher and higher round the walls of the house, and we were still alone and were just the same to each other; while somewhere far away from us, in glitter and noise, crowds of people thrilled, suffered and rejoiced, not thinking of us and of our existence which was ebbing away: Worst of all, I felt that, with each day, the habits of life were forging our life into one definite pattern, that our feeling was ceasing to be free, and was being subordinated to the even, passionless flow of time. In the morning we were gay, at dinner—respectful, in the evening—tender.

‘Good! . . .’ I said to myself. ‘It’s all very well to do good and to live honestly, as he says; but we have plenty of time for that yet, whereas there is something for which I only have the strength now.’ That was not what I wanted. I wanted a challenge; I wanted feeling to direct us in life, and not life to direct our feeling. I dreamt of going up to the edge of a precipice with him, saying: ‘One more step, and I’ll throw myself over the edge; one more move, and I shall perish!’ And then he would turn pale as he stood on the edge of the precipice, take me in his strong arms and hold me over it a moment so that my heart would stop beating, and then take me away—wherever he wished.

This state of mind even affected my health, and my nerves were now on edge. One morning I felt worse than usual; he came back from his office in a bad mood, which was rare for him. I noticed this at once, and asked him what the matter was. But he did not want

to tell me, saying that it was not worth it. As I afterwards learnt, the district police officer had summoned our peasants and, because he disliked my husband, had made unlawful demands on them and used threats. My husband—who was still unable to digest this and see only the amusing or pathetic side of it—was upset, and therefore did not want to talk to me. But I thought that he did not want to talk to me because he thought me a child who could not understand his preoccupations. I turned away from him in silence, and sent a servant to ask Maria Minichna, who was staying with us, to come to tea. After tea, which I finished particularly quickly, I took Maria Minichna into the morning-room and began talking to her very loudly about some nonsense which had no interest for me. He walked up and down the room, occasionally glancing at us. For some reason these glances made me want to talk and laugh all the more; everything I said and that Maria Minichna said seemed funny to me. Without a word, he went to his study and shut the door behind him. As soon as I could no longer hear him all my gaiety suddenly disappeared, to the surprise of Maria Minichna, who kept asking me what the matter was. Without replying, I sat down on the sofa, and felt like crying. 'What's he thinking up, anyway?' I thought. 'Some sort of nonsense, which seems important to him; but just let him try and tell me about it, I'll show him that it's all rubbish. Oh, no, he wants to think that I won't understand, wants to humiliate me by his lofty calm, wants to be always in the right. But then I'm right too, when I feel bored and empty, when I want

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to live, to move about', I thought, 'and not stay in one place and feel time passing me by. I want to move forward, and every day, every hour I want something new, but he wants to stay still and to hold me back with him. Yet how easy it would be for him! He need not take me to town to achieve this, he should just be like me, not try to change himself, not hold himself back, but live simply. That's what his advice is to me, but he's not simple himself. So there!'

I felt tears welling up, and was irritated with him. The fact that I was irritated frightened me, and I went to him. He was sitting writing in his study. Hearing my footsteps, he looked round indifferently and calmly, and went on writing. I did not like the look he gave me; instead of coming up to him I stood at the table at which he was writing, opened a book and began looking at it. Once again he interrupted his work and looked at me.

'Masha, you're in a bad mood?' he said.

I replied with a cold glance, which said: 'There's no need to ask—what's all this politeness for?' He shook his head and smiled timidly, tenderly; but, for the first time so far, I had no answering smile.

'What was the matter today?' I asked, 'Why didn't you tell me?'

'Oh, nothing! Just a little unpleasantness', he answered. 'However I can tell you now. Two of our men set out for town....'

But I did not let him finish.

'Why didn't you tell me before, when I asked at tea?'

'I would have said something stupid. I was angry then.'

'But it was just then that I wanted you to tell me.'

'Why?'

'Why do you think that I can never help you about anything?'

'Think, indeed!' he said, throwing down his pen. 'I think that I couldn't live without you. You not only help me in everything, everything, but you do everything. What an idea!' he laughed. 'I live only through you. I think all goes well only because you're here, because you are needed. . . .'

'Yes, I know that; I'm a nice child, who must be calmed down', I said in a voice which made him look up at me in surprise as if he was seeing something for the first time. 'I don't want any calm, you've got enough of it yourself—quite enough', I added.

'Well now, you see, it was like this', he started, hurriedly interrupting me, apparently afraid to let me say all that was on my mind. 'What would you have done about it?'

'I don't want to talk about it now', I answered. Although I did want to listen to him, I found it so pleasant to destroy his calm. 'I don't want to play at life, I want to live', I said, 'just like you.'

His face—on which everything was so quickly and vividly reflected—showed pain and increasing attention.

'I want to live as your equal, as your. . . .'

But I could not say any more: such sadness, deep sadness showed in his face. He was silent for a little.

'But in what way are you not my equal?' he said.

‘Because I, and not you, have to bother with the police officer and drunken peasants . . .?’

‘It’s not only that’, I said.

‘For God’s sake understand me, my dear’, he went on. ‘I know that worries always hurt us, I have lived and found this out. I love you and, consequently, cannot help wishing I could spare you all worry. That’s what my life is made up of, of love for you—so let me live it.’

‘You’re always right’, I said, not looking at him.

I was annoyed that, once again, everything was clear and calm in his mind, whereas I was filled with vexation and a feeling akin to repentance.

‘Masha, what’s the matter?’ he said. ‘It isn’t a question of whether I’m right or you’re right, but of something quite different: what have you got against me? Don’t speak at once; think a little, and tell me all that’s on your mind. You are angry with me—and probably you are right—but tell me what it is I am guilty of.’

But how could I tell him what was in my heart? The fact that he had immediately understood me, that I was once again a child before him, that I could not do anything which he did not understand and foresee, upset me all the more.

‘I haven’t anything against you’, I said. ‘It’s simply that I’m bored, and wish I wasn’t bored. But you say that it should be like that, and again you’re right!’

I said this, and looked at him. I had achieved my purpose; his calmness had disappeared, his expression showed fear and pain.

‘Masha’, he said, in a quiet voice filled with emotion.

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‘What we’re doing now is no joke. Our fate is now being decided. I ask you not to answer me, and to listen. Why do you want to cause me pain?’

But I interrupted him.

‘I know, you’ll be right. It’s better not to say anything; you’re right’, I said coldly, as if not I but some evil spirit was speaking within me.

‘If only you knew what you’re doing!’ he said, and his voice trembled.

I began to cry, and felt better. He was sitting beside me, and was silent. I was both sorry for him, and ashamed of myself and vexed at what I had done. I did not look at him. I felt that he must be looking at me at that moment either sternly or perplexed. I looked round: a mild, tender gaze was fixed on me, as if asking forgiveness. I took his hand and said:

‘Forgive me! I don’t know myself what I was saying.’

‘Yes, but I know what you said, and I know that you were right in what you said.’

‘What?’ I asked.

‘That we must go to Petersburg’, he said. ‘There’s nothing for us to do here now.’

‘As you like’, I said.

He took me in his arms and kissed me.

‘Forgive me’, he said. ‘I am to blame.’

That evening I played to him for a long time, while he walked up and down the room, whispering something. He had a habit of doing this; I would often ask him what it was he was whispering, and he would think about it for a moment and then would always answer me precisely what it had been; it was usually

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poetry, and sometimes complete nonsense, but nonsense from which I could gauge his mood.

‘What are you whispering now?’ I asked.

He stood still, thought a moment and, smiling, answered with two lines of Lermontov:

‘But it, demented, seeks a tempest,
As if in tempests peace is found . . .’¹

‘No, he’s more than a man; he knows everything!’ I thought. ‘How can one help loving him?’

I got up, took him by the hand, and began walking up and down with him, trying to fall in step.

‘Yes?’ he asked, smiling and looking at me.

‘Yes’, I said in a whisper; and suddenly we were both overcome with a fit of gaiety. Our eyes laughed, we made bigger and bigger steps and stood more and more on tiptoe. To the immense indignation of Grigori, and to the amazement of my mother-in-law who was playing patience in the drawing-room, we went through all the rooms in this way till we reached the dining-room, where we stopped, looked at each other, and burst out laughing.

Two weeks later, just before Easter, we were in Petersburg.

VII

OUR trip to Petersburg, the week in Moscow, his and my relatives, settling down in the new flat, the journey,

¹. Tolstoy misquotes Lermontov—the line should read ‘. . . But it, rebellious, seeks a tempest . . .’, etc. In the poem the ‘it’ refers to the sail of a boat — *Tr.*

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new towns and faces—all this passed like a dream. It was all so varied, new and gay, and all of it was so brilliantly illuminated by his presence and his love, that our quiet country existence seemed far off and insignificant. To my great surprise, instead of the worldly pride and coldness which I had expected to find in people, everyone greeted me with such genuine kindness and pleasure (not only relatives, but also people I did not know), that it seemed they had all been thinking of nothing but me, and had only been waiting for me to be happy themselves. Nor had I expected to find that my husband had friends in what seemed to me to be the best possible social set—friends that he had never mentioned to me; and I often found it odd and unpleasant to hear him pass stern judgment on some of these people, who seemed to me to be so kind. I could not understand why he was so short with them, and why he tried to avoid people whom it seemed to me flattering to know. I thought that the more kind people one knew, the better it was, and everyone was kind.

‘You see, we must arrange things in this way’, he had said before we left the country. ‘Here we are little Croesus, whereas there we shan’t be at all rich; and so we must only live in town till Easter, and not lead a social life, otherwise we shall get into a mess; besides, I wouldn’t like it for your sake. . . .’

‘What do we want a social life for?’ I answered. ‘We’ll just go to a few theatres, see relatives, visit the opera and hear good music, and then come back to the country before Easter.’

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But as soon as we arrived in Petersburg these plans were forgotten. I suddenly found myself in such a new and happy world, I was so overwhelmed with joy, so many new interests opened up before me, that immediately—if unconsciously—I renounced my past and all its plans. ‘That was nothing—child’s play; the real thing had not started yet; but this is real life! And surely, it’s nothing to what it will be?’ I thought. The uneasiness and the beginnings of nostalgia which had disturbed me in the country disappeared suddenly and completely, as if by magic. My love for my husband became calmer, and the thought that he might love me less no longer occurred to me. Indeed, I could not doubt his love: my every thought was immediately understood, my feelings shared, my wishes fulfilled by him. His calmness either disappeared or else no longer irritated me. Besides, I felt that, apart from his love for me, he now also admired me. Often, after a visit to a new friend or after a party given by us in our house at which I, inwardly quaking for fear of making a mistake, fulfilled the duties of hostess, he would say: ‘Good girl! Fine! Don’t be nervous. Really, very good!—and I was very pleased. Soon after our arrival he wrote a letter to his mother; when he called me to add a postscript he did not want to let me read what he had written; in consequence I, of course, insisted, and read it. ‘You won’t recognise Masha’, he had written, ‘and I can hardly recognise her myself. Where does she get that charming, graceful self-assurance, *affability*, even a social mentality and courtesy? And it’s all so simple, charming, and good-natured. Everyone is

delighted with her; even I can't admire her enough and—if it were possible—I would love her even more!'

'Ah! So that's what I'm like!' I thought, and I felt so gay and happy, and even had the feeling that I loved him more. The success I had with all our friends was quite unexpected for me. I was told from all sides that here an uncle liked me particularly, there an aunt had lost her heart to me, a man would tell me that there was not another woman like me in Petersburg, a woman would assure me that I had only to desire it to become the most sought-after woman in society. In particular a cousin of my husband's, Princess D., a society woman who was no longer young, suddenly became enamoured of me and told me more flattering things than anyone, quite turning my head. When this cousin asked me to go to a ball for the first time and I asked my husband about it, he turned to me and, with a scarcely noticeable sly smile, asked me whether I wanted to go. I nodded my head and felt myself blushing.

'She confesses to what she wants as if she were a criminal!' he said, laughing good-humouredly.

'But you said yourself that we shouldn't go out, and you don't like it', I answered, smiling and looking at him entreatingly.

'If you want to very much, then let's go', he said.

'Really, it's better not to.'

'Do you want to? Very much?' he asked again.

I did not answer.

'A social life in itself is only a slight affliction', he went on, 'but unrealised worldly desires—that's neither

good nor pretty. We must certainly go, and we will', he concluded determinedly.

'To tell you the truth', I said, 'there's nothing in the world I want more than to go to this ball.'

We did go, and I enjoyed myself beyond all my expectations. At the ball I felt even more than before that I was the centre around which everything revolved, that it was for my sake that the large ball-room was illuminated, the music played, and an admiring crowd had assembled. It seemed to me that everyone—from the hairdresser and maid to the dancers and old men who passed through the ball-room—told me or else made me feel that they loved me. The general opinion of me at that ball, as my cousin told me afterwards, was that I was quite unlike other women—that there was something special about me, a kind of countrified air, simple, and delightful. This success so flattered me that I candidly told my husband that I wished to go to two or three more balls, 'so as to get thoroughly fed up with them', I added insincerely.

My husband readily agreed, and at first was obviously pleased to go with me, and delighted at my success. He seemed to have forgotten completely all he had said before or, at least, to have changed his mind about it.

Later on, the life we were leading obviously became both a bore and a burden to him. But I had no time to notice that, and even if I did sometimes become aware of his enquiring gaze, at once grave and searching, I failed to grasp its significance. I was so dazed by the spontaneous affection that I apparently evoked from all

around me, and by the novel atmosphere of elegance and pleasure which I had never breathed before, his overwhelming moral influence disappeared so suddenly, I enjoyed so much being not only his equal but even his superior in that particular world—and hence loving him even more and in a more independent spirit than before—that I could not understand what he could see in social life that might be unpleasant for me. I experienced for the first time a feeling of pride and self-satisfaction when all eyes turned towards me as I entered a ball-room; whereas he would hasten to leave me and lose himself in a black crowd of tail-coats, as if ashamed to acknowledge his possession of me in front of the crowd. 'You just wait!' I often thought, picking out his inconspicuous and sometimes bored figure at the other end of the ballroom. 'Wait', I thought, 'till we get home, and you will understand and see whom I tried to be pretty and brilliant for, and what it is I love best of all I see around me tonight.' I sincerely imagined that my success gave me pleasure only because I would thus be in a position to offer it to him. The only way, I thought, in which social life could do me harm was in the possibility it offered of falling in love with one of the men I met at parties, and arousing my husband's jealousy; but he had such faith in me, seemed to be so calm and indifferent, and all those young people seemed to me so insignificant in comparison to him, that what I thought to be society's only danger did not frighten me. However, the attention paid me by many people of our social world pleased me, flattered my self-esteem, made me think

there was some sort of merit in my love for my husband, and made me treat him in a way which was self-assured and almost casual.

'I saw you having a very animated conversation about something with N.N.', I said once on our way back from a ball, shaking my finger at him and naming a well-known Petersburg lady with whom he had indeed talked that evening. I said this to stir him up—he was particularly silent and bored.

'Oh! why say things like that? And you, too, Masha!' he muttered through his teeth, frowning as if something pained him physically. 'How little that sort of things suits you and me! Let's leave it to other people; such a false relationship can spoil our real one, and I still hope that the real one will come back.'

I felt ashamed, and was silent.

'Will it come back, Masha? What do you think?' he asked.

'It has never ~~been~~ spoilt, and it won't be', I said, and I really thought so then.

'I hope to God you're right; anyway, it's time for us to go back to the country', he went on.

But he only said this to me once; the rest of the time it seemed to me that he was just as happy as I was, and I felt so joyful and gay. 'And even if he is bored sometimes', I consoled myself, 'I was bored too for his sake in the country; and even if our relationship has changed a little, everything will come back again once we're alone again with Tatiana Semyonovna in the summer, at Nikolskoye.'

And so the winter passed, without my noticing it,

and contrary to our plans we even spent Holy Week in Petersburg. The week after Easter we were already preparing to leave, and everything was packed. My husband had already brought presents and such things as plants for our country house, and was in a particularly tender and gay frame of mind, when his cousin unexpectedly came to see us, and begged us to stay on until Saturday in order to go to a party at Countess R.'s. She said that Countess R. was very anxious to have me, that a certain Prince M., who was then in Petersburg, had wanted to make my acquaintance ever since the last ball I had been at, that he was only going to the party for that reason, and that he said I was the prettiest woman in Russia. Everyone was going to be there and, in short, it would be disgraceful if I did not go.

My husband was at the other end of the drawing-room, talking to someone.

'Well then, Marie, are you coming?' his cousin said.

'We wanted to leave for the country the day after tomorrow', I answered indecisively, looking at my husband. Our eyes met; he hurriedly turned away.

'I'll persuade him to stay', his cousin said, 'and on Saturday we'll go and turn people's heads! All right?'

'That would upset our plans, and we've already packed', I answered, beginning to give in.

'It would be better for her to go and call on the prince this evening', my husband said from the other end of the room in a voice full of restrained irritation which I had never heard before.

'Ah! He's jealous! There, that's the first time I've

noticed it', his cousin laughed, 'but I'm not trying to persuade her for the prince's sake, Sergei Mikhailovitch, but for the sake of all of us. How Countess R. begged her to come!'

'It's up to her', my husband said coldly, and went out.

I saw that he was more than usually upset: this worried me, and I did not promise his cousin anything. As soon as she had left, I went to see my husband. He was walking up and down the room deep in thought, and neither saw nor heard me as I tiptoed in.

'There he is—thinking of our dear house at Nikol'skoye', I said to myself as I looked at him, 'and of morning coffee in the light drawing-room, and of his fields and peasants, and of evenings in the study, and of secret midnight feasts. . . . No!' I inwardly decided, 'I'll never go to another ball again and I'll give up the flattery of all the princes in the world for the sake of his happy confusion, of his quiet caress.' I wanted to tell him that I would not go and did not want to go to the party, when he suddenly looked round and frowned as he saw me, and the gentle and thoughtful expression of his face changed. Once more his look expressed perspicacity, wisdom, and patronising calm. He did not want me to see him as an ordinary person; he had always to be a demi-god on a pedestal to me.

'What's the matter, my dear?' he asked, casually and calmly turning towards me.

I did not answer. I was annoyed that he should conceal his true self from me, and not want to remain the person I loved.

'You want to go to the party on Saturday?' he asked.

'I wanted to', I answered, 'but you don't like it. And anyway, everything is packed', I added.

Never had he looked at me so coldly, never had he spoken so coldly to me.

'I shall not leave before Tuesday, and will order the things to be unpacked', he went on, 'So you can go, if you want to. Do me a favour, and go. I shall not be leaving.'

As always, when he was upset, he took to pacing up and down the room irritably, not looking at me.

'I simply don't understand you at all', I said, staying where I was but following him with my eyes. 'You say you are always so calm.' (He had never said this.) 'Why do you talk to me in this odd way: I'm ready to sacrifice this pleasure for your sake, while you, ironically somehow, in a way you never speak to me, insist that I should go.'

'Well, really! You make *sacrifices*'—he particularly stressed the word—and I make sacrifices. What could be better? It's a struggle for magnanimity. What greater family happiness can there be?'

It was the first time that I had heard such bitterly mocking words from him. His mocking did not shame me, but offended me, and his bitterness did not frighten me, but was transmitted to me. Had he, who was always so afraid of empty phrases in our relationship, who was always sincere and simple, really said this? And why? Precisely because, for his sake, I wanted to sacrifice a pleasure in which I could see nothing bad,

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and because a minute before I had so well understood and loved him. Our roles were changed—he avoided straightforward and simple words, whereas I sought them.

‘You have changed a great deal’, I said, with a sigh. ‘What am I guilty of? It’s not the party you have against me deep down in your heart; it’s something else, something long-standing. Why be insincere? Weren’t you yourself afraid of insincerity before? Tell me straight out: What have you against me?’ ‘What will he say?’ I thought, remembering with self-satisfaction that he had had nothing with which to reproach me all the winter.

I came out into the middle of the room, so that he had to pass close by me, and I looked at him. The thought ‘He will come up to me, take me in his arms, and it will all be finished with’, came into my head, and I even began to feel sorry that I would not have to prove him to be in the wrong. But he stopped at the other end of the room and looked at me.

‘You still don’t understand?’ he asked.

‘No.’

‘Well then, I’ll tell you. I am disgusted, disgusted for the first time, at what I feel and cannot help feeling.’ He stopped, visibly alarmed at the harsh sound of his own voice.

‘But what is it?’ I asked, with tears of indignation in my eyes.

‘It’s disgusting, that the prince should think you pretty, and that therefore you should run after him, forgetting your husband, and yourself, and your

womanly dignity. It's disgusting that you should not want to understand what your husband must feel for you, if you yourself have no feeling of self-respect; on the contrary, you come and tell your husband that you are making a *sacrifice*—in other words: “It would be a great pleasure for me to show myself to His Highness, but I am making a *sacrifice* of it!”

The longer he spoke, the more the sound of his own voice inflamed him, and his voice sounded venomous, cruel and harsh. I had never seen nor expected to see him like that. My heart thumped, I was afraid; but at the same time feelings of undeserved shame and injured pride surged up in me, and I wanted to take my revenge on him.

‘I’ve expected this for a long time’, I said. ‘Go on, go on.

‘I don’t know what you were expecting’, he continued. ‘I could expect the worst, seeing you every day in the filth, idleness and luxury of that idiotic society, and I got what I expected . . . so that now I’m ashamed and hurt, as I’ve never been before; hurt for myself, when your friend tried to probe my heart with her filthy hands and began talking about jealousy—about my jealousy; and of whom am I supposed to be jealous? Of a man whom neither you nor I know. While you, as if on purpose, refuse to understand me, and wish to sacrifice to me . . . what, indeed? I’m ashamed for you, I’m ashamed of your humiliation. . . . Sacrifice!’ he repeated.

‘Ah! So that’s what a husband’s power is like!’ I thought. ‘To insult and humiliate a woman who is not

guilty of anything—that's what a husband's rights consist of; but I won't submit to them.'

'No, I'm making no sacrifice to you', I went on, feeling my nostrils dilate unnaturally and the blood leaving my face. 'I will go to the party on Saturday. I will most certainly go.'

'And I wish you joy of it—only all is over between us!' he shouted in a burst of uncontrolled fury. 'But you won't torment me any more. I was a fool to . . .' he started again, but his lips began to tremble, and with a visible effort he refrained from finishing what he had started to say.

At that moment I was afraid of him, and hated him. I wanted to say a great deal and to take my revenge for all his insults: but if I had opened my mouth I would have burst into tears, and would have lowered myself in his eyes. I left the room in silence. But no sooner had I ceased to hear his footsteps than I was horrified at what we had done. I was afraid that the bond which constituted my happiness would indeed snap for ever, and I wanted to go back to him. 'But will he have regained his calm sufficiently to understand me if I stretch out my hand in silence, and look at him?' I thought. 'Will he understand my generosity? What if he should call my grief a pretence? Or if, with conscious righteousness and proud calm, he should accept my repentance and forgive me? And why, why has he, whom I love so much, so cruelly insulted me?'

I went, not to him, but to my own room, where I sat alone for a long time, weeping and recalling with horror every word of the conversation which had

taken place between us; I replaced those words by others, adding different, kind words—and the memory of what had happened would again overwhelm me with its horror, and my feelings would be outraged. In the evening when I went down to tea and met my husband in the presence of S., who had called on us, I felt that from that day a whole abyss had opened up between us. S. asked me when we were leaving. I did not have time to answer.

‘On Tuesday’, my husband answered. ‘We have still to go to a party at Countess R.’s. You are going, aren’t you?’ he turned to me.

I was frightened by the sound of that ordinary voice, and looked round timidly at my husband. His eyes were looking straight at me, their expression was malicious and mocking, his voice was even and cold.

‘Yes’, I answered.

In the evening, when we were by ourselves, he came up to me and held out his hand.

‘Please forget what I said to you’, he said.

I took his hand with a trembling smile and with tears ready to flow, but he took his hand away and, as if afraid of a sentimental scene, sat down in an armchair some distance away from me. ‘Does he really still believe he was right?’ I thought—and the explanation which I had ready and the request that we should not go to the party remained unsaid.

‘We must write and tell Mamma that we have put off our departure’, he said, ‘or she will be worried.’

‘When were you thinking of leaving?’ I asked.

‘On Tuesday, after the party’, he answered.

'I hope it's not for my sake', I said, looking at him straight in the eyes; but his eyes only looked back at me, and said nothing, as if they were somehow shrouded from me. His face suddenly seemed old to me, and unpleasant.

We went to the party, and it seemed that a good, amicable relationship had been re-established between us; but this relationship was quite different to what it had been before.

I was sitting with the ladies at the party when the prince came up to me, so that I had to stand up in order to speak to him. As I got up I instinctively looked for my husband, and saw him look at me from the other end of the ball-room, and turn away. I suddenly felt so ashamed and hurt that I became painfully shy, and blushed all over my face and neck under the gaze of the prince. But I had to go on standing and listening to what he was saying as he looked down at me. Our conversation did not last long—there was nowhere for him to sit beside me, and he probably sensed that I felt very ill at ease with him. Our conversation was about a previous ball, of where I spent the summer, and so on. Taking leave of me, the prince expressed a wish to make the acquaintance of my husband, and I saw them meet and talk at the other end of the ball-room. The prince must probably have said something about me, for in the middle of their conversation he looked round smiling in our direction.

My husband suddenly blushed, bowed low, and was the first to take his leave. I blushed too: I felt ashamed of the impression which I—and especially my husband

—must have made on the prince. It seemed to me that everyone had noticed my awkward shyness when I was talking to the prince, and had noticed my husband's strange behaviour; goodness knows how they could explain it—did they perhaps know about my conversation with my husband? His cousin took me home, and on the way she and I spoke of my husband. I could not refrain from telling her all that had happened between us because of this unfortunate party. She reassured me by saying that that kind of thing meant nothing, and that it was a very usual misunderstanding which would not leave any traces. She explained to me my husband's character as she understood it, and said that she thought he had become very uncommunicative and proud. I agreed with her, and felt that I now understood him better and more dispassionately myself.

But later, when he and I were alone together, the fact of having discussed him lay heavy on my conscience like a crime, and I felt that the gulf which now separated us had widened still further.

VIII

FROM that day our life and our relationship changed completely. We were no longer as happy when we were alone as we had been. There were questions which we avoided, and we could talk more easily in

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the presence of a third person than we could by ourselves. As soon as we started to talk about life in the country or about the ball our eyes betrayed an uneasy conscience, and we felt awkward when we looked at each other. We both seemed to feel exactly where the gulf was that separated us, and were afraid to approach it. I was convinced that he was proud and touchy, and that one had to be very careful not to offend his susceptibilities. He was convinced that I could not live without parties, that country life was not for me, and that he had to submit to this unfortunate taste. We both avoided speaking directly about these subjects, and each judged the other wrongly. We had each long since ceased to regard the other as the most perfect person in the world, but made comparisons with others, and secretly passed judgment on each other.

I fell ill before our departure, and instead of going to the country we went to our summer villa, whence my husband went on alone to his mother. When he left I was sufficiently recovered to go with him, but he persuaded me to stay behind on the pretext that he was worried about my health. I felt it was not my health that worried him, but the thought that we would not be happy in the country; I did not much insist on going with him, and remained behind. Without him I felt empty and lonely, but when he came back I saw that he no longer added something to my life, as he had done before. Our relationship was no longer what it used to be when, as would sometimes happen, every thought, every impression not shared with him would weigh on me like a crime, when his every word and

deed seemed to me models of perfection, when we felt like laughing for joy as we looked at each other; that relationship so imperceptibly changed into another that we did not even notice that it was no longer there. We each of us acquired our separate interests and worries, which we no longer even tried to share. We even ceased to be embarrassed by the fact that we each had our own separate world, foreign to the other. We became accustomed to this idea and, after a year's time, our eyes no longer betrayed an uneasy conscience when we looked at each other. His bouts of gaiety when he was with me and his childish pranks disappeared completely, as did his all-forgiveness and indifference to everything, which had formerly aroused my indignation. He no longer had that penetrating look which used to confuse and gladden me, there were no more prayers, no more transports of joy together, we did not even see each other very often—he was constantly away, and was neither afraid nor sorry to leave me alone; I constantly went to parties, where I did not need him.

There were no longer any scenes or quarrels between us; I tried to please him, he fulfilled all my wishes, and we appeared to love each other.

When we were by ourselves—which rarely occurred—I experienced neither joy, nor emotion, nor confusion, just as if I were by myself. I knew very well that he was my husband and not some other, unknown person, but a good man—my husband, whom I knew as well as I knew myself. I was convinced that I knew everything he would do or say, how he would look,

and if he acted or looked differently to what I expected I felt that it was he who had made a mistake. I expected nothing from him. In a word, he was my husband and nothing more. It seemed to me that it was exactly as it should be, that there could be no other relationship, and that between us there had never even been any other. When he went away, especially at first, I felt lonely and frightened—without him I felt all the more strongly how important his support was to me; when he came back I would throw my arms round his neck from joy, although two hours later I would completely forget my joy and have nothing to say to him. It was only in moments of quiet, restrained tenderness which we sometimes had that I felt something was wrong; something made my heart ache, and in his eyes I seemed to read the same thing. I sensed this limit of tenderness which he did not seem to want to, and which I could not, cross. Sometimes this made me sad, but I had not time to think about anything, and I tried to forget the sadness that these dimly-felt changes caused me, in the amusements which were constantly waiting for me. Social life, which at first had dazed me with its glitter and its flattery to my pride, soon completely took possession of me, became habit, fastened its fetters on me, and occupied in my heart all the place which rightly belonged to feeling. I now never remained alone with myself, and was afraid to think too deeply about my way of life. All my time was occupied, from late morning till late at night, and no longer belonged to me, even if I did not go out. I was no longer either amused or bored by this, but it seemed to

me that it must always have been just like that, and in no way different.

So passed three years, during which time our relationship remained the same, as if it had stood still, become set, and could not become either worse or better. During these three years two important events occurred in our family life, but neither of them altered my life. These events were the birth of my first child, and the death of Tatiana Semyonovna. At first a maternal feeling seized me with such force and such unexpected joy seized me that I thought a new life would begin for me; but after two months, when I started to go out again, this feeling grew weaker and weaker, and was finally transformed into a habit and the cold fulfilment of a duty. My husband, on the contrary, with the birth of our first son became the gentle, calm home-lover he used to be, and transferred his former tenderness and gaiety to the child. Often, when I went into the nursery in evening dress to say goodnight to the child and found my husband there, I noticed his seemingly reproachful and sternly thoughtful gaze fixed on me, and I would feel ashamed. I would suddenly be horrified at my indifference to the child, and would ask myself: 'Am I really worse than other women? But what can I do?' I thought. 'I love my son, but I simply can't sit with him all day, it bores me: and I refuse to pretend about it.'

His mother's death was a great grief to him; it was hard for him, as he said, to go on living at Nikolskoye without her; but although I was both sorry for her and sympathised with my husband's grief, life in the

country was now pleasanter for me, and I felt more at ease there. During these three years we spent most of our time in town. I only went to the country once every two months, and in the third year we went abroad.

We spent the summer at a spa.

I was then twenty-one years old; our financial situation was, I thought, flourishing; I did not demand anything more from family life than it gave me; it seemed to me that everyone I knew loved me; my health was good, I was the best-dressed woman at the spa, I knew I was pretty, the weather was wonderful, an atmosphere of beauty and elegance surrounded me, and I felt very gay. I was not as gay as I had been at Nikolskoye, when I had felt that I was happy within myself, that I was happy because I deserved happiness, that my happiness was great but that it must become still greater, that I wanted more and more happiness. Then it was different; but that summer, too, I was content. I desired nothing, hoped for nothing, feared nothing, and I felt that I had a full life and a clear conscience. Among the young people that season there was not one man I distinguished from the others in any way—even from old Prince K., our minister, who paid me marked attention. One was young, another old, one a fair-haired Englishman, another a Frenchman with a little beard—they were all the same to me, but they were all essential to me. They were all equally indifferent faces making up the joyful atmosphere of the life surrounding me. Only one of them, an Italian Marquis D., attracted my attention more than the

others by the daring way he expressed his admiration for me. He never missed an opportunity of being with me—of dancing, riding, going to the casino and so on—and of telling me that I was beautiful. From the window I saw him several times outside our house, and often the unpleasant, intent gaze of his bright eyes would make me blush and look round. He was young, good-looking, elegant and, above all, in his smile and the shape of his forehead he resembled my husband, but was much better-looking. I was struck by this similarity, although his general appearance—his lips, the expression of his eyes, his long chin—all had something coarse and animal in place of the charm exuded by my husband's expression of kindness and ideal calm. At that time I supposed that the marquis loved me passionately, and I occasionally thought of him with proud compassion. I sometimes wanted to calm him, to bring him round to a tone of half-friendly, quiet trust, but he sharply rejected these attempts, and continued to disconcert me unpleasantly with his passion—unexpressed, but ready to express itself at any moment. Although I did not even acknowledge it to myself, I was afraid of that man, and often thought of him in spite of myself. My husband knew him, and was even colder and haughtier with him than with our other acquaintances, for whom he was only his wife's husband.

Towards the end of the season I fell ill, and did not leave the house for a fortnight. When I went out in the evening to a concert for the first time after my illness, I learnt that in my absence Lady S., who had long been

expected and was famed for her beauty, had arrived. There was a crowd round me, people greeted me with pleasure, but there was a still greater crowd around the newly-arrived lioness. Everyone around me was talking only of her and of her beauty. She was pointed out to me, and she really was lovely, but I was unpleasantly struck by the expression of self-satisfaction on her face, and I said so. That day everything which had formerly been so amusing seemed boring to me. Another day Lady S. arranged an excursion to a castle, which I declined to join. Practically no one remained with me, and everything finally changed for me. Everything and everyone seemed stupid and boring to me. I wanted to cry, to finish the cure quickly and to go back to Russia. There was some sort of unpleasant feeling in my heart, but I did not acknowledge it to myself as yet. I pleaded convalescence, and ceased to appear on grand occasions, and only sometimes went out alone in the mornings and to take the waters, or went out driving in the neighbourhood with L.M., a Russian lady of our acquaintance. My husband was not there at that time; he had gone to Heidelberg for a few days, waiting for the end of my cure to go back to Russia, and he rarely came to see me.

One day Lady S. had induced everyone to go to a shooting-party, and L.M. and I went to the castle after dinner. While we drove in the carriage at walking-pace along the winding avenue flanked by ancient chestnut trees through which could be seen the attractive, elegant suburbs of Baden-Baden lit up by the rays of the setting sun, our conversation took a serious turn

such as it had never taken before. L.M., whom I had known for a long time, now for the first time appeared to me as a good, intelligent woman with whom one could talk about everything, and whom it was pleasant to have as a friend. We spoke of our families, our children, about the emptiness of life in Baden, we suddenly had a longing to go back to Russia, to the country, and somehow we felt sad, and yet we felt better. We went into the castle, still under the influence of the same grave mood. Inside it was shady and cool, sunshine played on the ruins above us, and the sounds of footsteps and voices could be heard. The door served as a frame, through which could be seen a typical Baden view—charming, though cold to us Russians. We sat down to rest, and gazed silently at the setting sun. The sound of voices became more distinct, and I thought I heard someone mention my name. I began to listen, and involuntarily overheard every word. The voices were familiar: it was the Marquis D. and a Frenchman, his friend, whom I also knew. They were talking about me, and about Lady S. The Frenchman compared her to me, and analysed the beauty of both of us. He did not say anything offensive, but my heart thumped as I overheard his words. He explained in detail what my good points were, and what were those of Lady S. I had a child already, whereas Lady S. was only nineteen; my hair was more luxuriant, but Lady S. had a more graceful figure; Lady S. was more of a *grande dame*, 'whereas yours', he said, 'is so-so, one of those little Russian princesses who are beginning to appear here so often'. He concluded

by saying that I was quite right not to try to compete with Lady S., and that I was definitely finished in Baden.

‘I’m sorry for her.’

‘Unless she feels like consoling herself with you’, he added, with a gay, hard laugh.

‘If she goes away, I shall go after her’, said the voice with the Italian accent, roughly.

‘Happy mortal! He can still love!’ laughed the Frenchman.

‘Love!’ said the voice, and was silent for a moment. ‘I cannot help loving; there’s no life without it. The only thing worth doing is to make a novel out of life. My novels never stop half-way, and I shall bring this one to a conclusion.’

.. ‘*Bonne chance, mon ami*’, said the Frenchman.

.. we did not hear any more, because they went round the corner, and we heard their footsteps from the other side. They went down the stairs, and after a few minutes came through the side door; they were very surprised to see us. I blushed when the marquis came up to me, and was terrified when he gave me his arm as we left the castle. I could not refuse, and we walked to the carriage behind L.M., who was walking with his friend. I felt insulted by what the Frenchman had said about me, although I had to acknowledge that he had only expressed my own feelings; but the marquis’s words had surprised me and roused my indignation by their coarseness. I was tormented by the thought that I had heard what he had said and that, in spite of it, he was not afraid of me. It was unpleasant to feel him so close

and, without looking at him or answering him, and trying to hold his arm so as not to hear what he was saying, I hurriedly followed L.M. and the Frenchman. The marquis was saying something about the beautiful view, about the unexpected pleasure of meeting me, and so on—but I was not listening to him. I was thinking then about my husband, about my son, about Russia; I felt ashamed about something, sorry about something, I wanted something, and I was in a hurry to get home as quickly as possible to my lonely room in the Hôtel de Bade so as to be able to consider at leisure all the feelings surging up in me. But L.M. walked slowly, the carriage was still a long way off, and my partner seemed intent on walking more and more slowly, as if trying to hold me back. 'It's impossible!' I thought, and walked faster with determination. But he was definitely trying to hold me back, and was even pressing my arm. L.M. disappeared round the corner of the road, and we were quite alone. I was afraid.

'Excuse me', I said coldly, and tried to free my arm, but my lace sleeve got caught on a button of his coat. Bending towards me, he started to disentangle the sleeve, and his gloveless fingers touched my hand. A new kind of feeling, terror mingled with pleasure, ran like a shiver down my spine. I looked at him, trying to express with one cold glance all the contempt that I felt for him; but my glance expressed something different: it expressed fear and agitation. His burning, moist eyes close to my face looked at me strangely, at my neck, at my breast; both his hands held mine above

the wrist; his open lips were saying something—were saying that he loved me, that I meant everything to him, and his lips came closer to me, and his hands pressed mine harder, burning me. Fire ran in my veins, everything became blurred, I was trembling, and the words with which I wanted to stop him dried in my throat. Suddenly I felt a kiss on my cheek and, trembling and growing cold all over, I looked at him. Without strength to speak or move, terrified, I waited and wanted something. All this lasted for an instant, but that instant was terrible. In the course of it I saw the whole of him so clearly. I so well understood his face, the abrupt, low forehead—so similar to my husband's—visible under a straw hat; the beautiful, straight nose with distended nostrils; the long, finely powdered moustache and the little beard; the smoothly-shaved cheeks and sunburnt neck. I hated, I feared him; he was so alien to me; but at that instant the emotion and passion of that hated stranger found such a powerful response in me! I irresistibly longed to give myself up to the kisses of that coarse and beautiful mouth, to the caresses of those white hands with fine veins, and with rings on the fingers; I felt impelled to throw myself headlong into the abyss of forbidden delights thus suddenly opening up in front of me!

'I'm so unhappy', I thought. 'What does it matter if more and more unhappiness falls to my lot?'

He embraced me with one arm, and bent down towards my face. 'Let it be, let me be covered with still more shame and sin', I thought.

'*Je vous aime*', he whispered, in a voice that was so

like my husband's. I remembered my husband and child as if they were dear things that had existed long ago, and as if all was over between them and me. But at that very moment, from round the bend in the road, came the sound of L.M.'s voice calling me. I recovered myself, tore my hand away, and, without looking at him, almost ran after L.M. We sat down in the carriage, and it was only then that I looked at him. He took off his hat and asked me something, smiling. He did not understand the inexpressible disgust that I felt for him at that moment.

My life seemed so unhappy to me, the future so hopeless, the past so black! L.M. talked to me, but I did not understand what she was saying. I thought that she only spoke to me because she was sorry for me, to hide the contempt that I aroused in her. In every word in every look I imagined this contempt and wounding pity. His kiss burnt my cheek with shame, and I could not bear the thought of my husband and child. When I was alone in my room I hoped to think over my position, but I was afraid to be alone. I did not finish the tea which was brought me, and for no reason that I could explain, I started feverishly then and there to make ready to catch the evening train to Heidelberg, to rejoin my husband.

My maid and I sat down in an empty carriage, the train moved off, I felt the coolness of the air through the open window, and began to recover and to have a clearer vision both of my past and my future. I suddenly saw all my married life, from the day of our move to Petersburg, in a new light, and I felt it lie

heavily like a reproach on my conscience. For the first time I vividly recalled our early days in the country and our plans, and for the first time the question: What sort of happiness did he have, all this time?—came into my head. And I felt guilty. ‘But why didn’t he stop me, why did he play the hypocrite, why did he avoid explanations, why did he hurt me?’ I asked myself. ‘Why did he not make use of the power of his love over me? Perhaps he did not love me?’ But however much he might be to blame, the kiss of another man was imprinted on my cheek, and I felt it. The nearer I got to Heidelberg, the clearer became the image I had of my husband, and the more terrifying the forthcoming meeting. ‘I’ll tell him everything, everything, I’ll sob it all out with tears of repentance’, I thought, ‘and he will forgive me.’ But I did not know myself what that ‘everything’ was, and did not myself believe that he would forgive me.

But as soon as I entered my husband’s room and saw his calm, if surprised, face, I felt that I had nothing to tell him, nothing to confess, and no reason to ask for his forgiveness. Unexpressed grief and repentance had to remain locked within me.

‘Why did you take it into your head to come here?’ he said. ‘I had planned to go to you tomorrow.’ But he was obviously alarmed when he looked more closely at my face. ‘What’s happened? What’s the matter with you?’ he went on.

‘Nothing’, I answered, scarcely holding back my tears. ‘I’ve come for good. Let’s go back to Russia—tomorrow, if possible.’

He was silent for a time, and looked at me thoughtfully.

'Come now, tell me what has happened to you', he said.

I blushed involuntarily, and looked down. Injured pride and anger flashed in his eyes. I was afraid of what he might think, and with a wealth of hypocrisy which I never suspected in me, I said:

'Nothing has happened. I just got bored and sad living by myself, and thought a great deal about our life and about you. I have been to blame for so long now! Why do you accompany me to places you don't want to go to? I have been to blame for so long', I repeated, and once more I felt tears welling up. 'Let's go back and live in the country, and for good.'

'Oh, my dear, spare me sentimental scenes', he said coldly. 'It's fine that you shoul' want to go back and live in the country, because we haven't much money; as to going there for good—that's a myth. I know you would never be able to settle down there. There now, have some tea and you'll feel better', he concluded, getting up to ring for the servant.

I imagined all he might think of me, and felt outraged by the dreadful thoughts that I attributed to him as I met his uncertain and seemingly self-conscious gaze. 'No, he doesn't want to and can't understand me!' I said I was going to look at the child, and left him. I wanted to be alone, and to cry and cry and cry....

OUR house at Nikolskoye, long unheated and empty, revived again, but that which had lived in it did not revive. His mother was no more, and we lived alone, face to face. Now we not only had no heed for solitude, but it even embarrassed us. The winter was all the more difficult for me as I was ill, and recovered only after the birth of my second son. I continued to have the same coldly-friendly relationship with my husband as we had had during our life in town, but in the country every floor-board, every wall, every sofa reminded me of what he had been for me, and of what I had lost. It was as if we were divided by some unforgiven offence—as if he was punishing me for something while pretending not to notice it himself. There was nothing to ask forgiveness for, there was no reason to ask for mercy: he punished me only by not giving me his whole self, his whole soul, as he had done before: but he gave it to no one and to nothing, as if he no longer had it to give. Sometimes I thought that he was pretending to be like that only in order to torment me, but that his former feeling was still alive within him, and I would try to arouse it. But each time he seemed to avoid frankness, seemed to suspect me of hypocrisy, and seemed to be afraid of sentimentality as of something ridiculous. His look and his tone said: 'I know everything, everything; there's nothing more to be said, and I know all you want to say. I know, too, that you will say one thing and do another.' At first I was hurt by this avoidance of frankness, but then I

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became used to the idea that it was not frankness, but the absence of the need for frankness. My tongue would no longer suddenly form the words to tell him that I loved him, or to ask him to read prayers with me, or to call him to hear me play the piano. Certain rules of propriety were now felt between us. We each lived apart: he, with his occupations in which I could not and no longer wished to take part; I, with my idleness, which no longer worried or saddened him as it had done formerly. The children were still too small, and could not yet unite us.

But spring came. Katia and Sonia came to live in the country for the summer, our house at Nikolskoye was being rebuilt, and we moved to Pokrovskoye. It was the same old house with its terraces, with the folding table and the piano in the light drawing-room, and my old room with white curtain and my girlhood's dreams, which had somehow been forgotten there. There were two beds in this room: one—which had been mine—in which I would make the sign of the cross over sprawling, chubby Kokosha in the evenings, and the other a small bed in which Vanya's little face peeped out from under the shawls. When I was saying good-night to them I would often stop in the middle of the quiet little room, and suddenly, from every corner, from the walls, from the curtains, the old, forgotten visions of youth would creep out, the old voices of my girlhood's songs would begin to sing. And what had become of these visions, of these dear, sweet songs? All I had hardly dared hope had been realised. What had been vague, intermingled dreams

had turned into reality, and reality had turned into a hard, difficult and joyless life. And yet everything was just the same: the same garden could be seen from the window, the same lawn, the same path, the same bench over there above the ravine, the same sound of nightingales' song came across from the pond, the same lilac all in flower, and the same moon stood over the house—and yet, everything had so terribly, so impossibly changed. Everything was so distant, that could have been so near and dear! Just as of old, I would sit quietly in the drawing-room talking to Katia, and talking about him. But Katia had become wrinkled and yellow, her eyes no longer shone with joy and hope, but expressed sympathetic sorrow and pity. We no longer praised him, as of old, we analysed him; we no longer marvelled and wondered why and wherefore we were so happy, and we no longer wanted, as we had done, to tell the whole world what we were thinking: like conspirators, whispering to each other, we would ask each other a hundred times why everything had so sadly changed. And he was just the same too, only with deeper furrows between his eyebrows, with more grey hair on his temples; but his profound and thoughtful gaze was always shrouded from me as by a cloud. And I, too, was just the same, only I no longer had any love within me, or any desire for love. I felt no necessity to work, no satisfaction with myself. My former religious ecstasy and the love I had once felt for him, the old fullness of life, now seemed so distant and impossible. I would not now have understood what had before seemed to me so obvious and

right—the happiness of living for someone else. Why live for someone else when there is no desire to live for oneself?

I had completely given up my music ever since we had moved to Petersburg, but now the old piano and music books began to appeal to me once again.

One day I did not feel well, and stayed at home by myself. Katia and Sonia had gone to Nikolskoye with my husband to look at the new building. The table was laid for tea, I went downstairs and, while I was waiting for them, sat down at the piano. I opened the *Sonata quasi una fantasia* and started to play it. There was no one about, the windows were open on to the garden, and the well-known, sadly solemn notes resounded through the room. I finished playing the first movement and, quite unconsciously, from long habit glanced at the corner in which he once used to sit listening to me. But he was not there; the chair, long untouched, stood in its corner, and through the window a bush of lilac could be seen against a light sunset. The freshness of the evening poured in through the open window. I leant my arms on the piano, covered my face with both hands, and was plunged in thought. I sat like that for a long time, partially remembering the old, irretrievable life, and timidly thinking out a new one. But nothing seemed to lie before me, no desire, no hope. 'Is my life really finished?' I thought and, horror-struck, I raised my head and began to play the same *andante* all over again so as to forget and not to think. 'Oh God!' I thought, 'forgive me if I am guilty, or give me back all that used to be so wonderful

in my soul, or teach me what to do—how to live now.' I heard the noise of wheels on the grass and in front of the porch, and from the terrace came the sound of careful, familiar footsteps, and then silence. But it was no longer the old feeling that responded to the sound of those familiar footsteps. 'When I had finished playing I heard steps behind me, and a hand was laid on my shoulder.

'How clever of you to have played that sonata', he said.

I was silent.

'You haven't had tea?'

I shook my head, and did not look round at him, so as not to disclose the traces of emotion remaining on my face.

'They will be coming in a moment: the horse played up, and they continued on foot from the main road', he said.

'Let's wait for them', I said, and went out on the terrace, hoping that he would follow me; but he asked about the children, and went to see them. Once more his presence, his simple, kind voice convinced me that I was wrong in thinking that something was lost to me. What more could one want? He was kind, gentle, a good husband, a good father. I did not know myself what else I needed. I went out on the balcony and sat down under the awning of the terrace on the very bench on which I had sat on the day of his proposal. The sun had already set, night was drawing on, and a dark spring-time cloud hung over the house and garden. Only one clear patch of sky, with the dying

sunset and an evening star which had just broken through, could be seen from behind the trees. The shadow of the little cloud lay over everything, and everything was waiting for the gentle summer rain. The wind dropped; not a leaf, not a blade of grass stirred. The scent of lilac and cherry-blossom filled the garden and the terrace, as if all the air was in bloom; it came in waves, now stronger, now weaker, so that one wanted to close one's eyes and see nothing, hear nothing apart from that sweet scent. The dahlias and rose-bushes, not yet in bloom, stretched out motionless along the dark, furrowed flower-beds, and seemed to be slowly growing up their white supports of whittled wood. From the ravine came the sound of frogs croaking piercingly and in unison with all their might, as if in a final outburst before the rain that would drive them into the water. All that could be heard above this clamour was a thin, uninterrupted sound of water. Nightingales called to each other in turn, and could be heard anxiously flying from place to place. That spring a nightingale had once again tried to make its home in a bush under the window, and when I went out on the terrace I heard it fly across to the other side of the drive, from where it clucked once and was silent, waiting too.

It was in vain that I tried to reassure myself; I was waiting and hoping for something.

He came down, and sat down beside me.

'It looks as if they will get wet', he said.

'Yes', I said, and we were both silent for a long time. There was no wind, and the cloud came lower and

lower; everything became quieter, stiller, and more fragrant. Suddenly a raindrop fell and seemed to bounce on the canvas awning of the terrace, another fell on the gravel path; drops splashed on the burdocks, and heavy, cool rain came down harder and harder. The nightingales and frogs became quite silent, only the thin sound of water falling continued to fill the air—although it, too, sounded further away because of the rain—and a bird, probably hiding in the dry leaves not far from the terrace, evenly gave out its two uniform notes. He stood up, and wanted to leave.

‘Where are you going?’ I asked, holding him back. ‘It’s so nice here.’

‘I must have an umbrella and galoshes sent out to them’, he answered.

‘It’s not worth it; it will soon be over.’

He agreed with me, and we remained together by the balustrade of the terrace. I leaned my arm against the slippery wet rail, and put my head out. The fresh rain unevenly sprinkled my hair and neck. The little cloud, growing lighter and smaller, emptied itself over us; the even sound of the rain gave way to rare drops falling from above and from the leaves. Below, the frogs began to croak again, the nightingales broke into song once more, and began to answer each other out of the wet bushes, now from one side, now from the other. Everything was light again before us.

‘How lovely it is!’ he said, sitting down on the balustrade and stroking my wet hair with his hand.

This simple caress affected me like a reproach: I wanted to cry.

'And what more can a man want?' he said. 'I am so content now that I don't need anything. I'm completely happy.'

'You didn't always speak to me like that about your happiness', I thought. 'No matter how great it was, you used to say that you wanted more and more of something. But now you are calm and content, whereas my heart is somehow full of unexpressed repentance and unshed tears.'

'I feel all right, too', I said, 'but sad, just because everything around me is so lovely. Inside me everything is so incoherent, so incomplete; I still feel I want something, but here it's so beautiful and peaceful. Don't you, too, have a feeling of nostalgia mixed with your delight in nature, as if you wanted something that is past?'

He took his hand off my head, and was silent for a little.

'Yes, formerly I used to feel that too, especially in spring', he said, as if trying to recollect it. 'And I too used to sit up at night, wishing and hoping—and how good they were, those nights! . . . But then, everything was before me, and now it is all behind me: now I am content with what I have, and feel fine', he concluded—in such an assured and casual way that, however painful it was to hear him, I believed that he was speaking the truth.

'And you don't wish for anything?' I asked.

'Nothing that is impossible', he answered, guessing my feeling. 'Look, you're getting your head wet', he added, stroking me like a child and passing his hand

over my hair again. 'You envy the leaves and the grass because the rain waters them; you would like to be both the leaves and the grass and the rain. Whereas I simply rejoice for them, as I do for everything in the world that is beautiful and young and happy.'

'And you don't regret anything of the past?' I went on asking, feeling my heart grow heavy.

He thought a little, and was silent again. I saw that he wanted his answer to be absolutely sincere.

'No!' he answered shortly.

'It's not true! It's not true!' I said, turning towards him and looking him straight in the eyes. 'You don't regret the past?'

'No!' he repeated once again. 'I am grateful for it, but I don't regret the past.'

'But would you really not like to bring it back?' I said.

He turned, and gazed into the garden.

'I don't wish to, in the same way as I don't wish to grow wings', he said. 'It's impossible!'

'And you wouldn't like to change the past? You don't reproach yourself—or me?'

'Never! Everything was for the best.'

'Listen!' I said, touching his hand to make him look round at me. 'Listen! Why did you never tell me what you wanted, so that I would have lived just as you wished? Why did you let me have my freedom, which I didn't know how to use? Why did you stop being my mentor? If you had wanted to, if you had guided me differently, nothing, nothing would have happened', I said, in a voice which increasingly expressed

cold vexation and reproach, and not my former love.

'What wouldn't have happened?' he said, turning round to me in amazement. 'Nothing did. Everything is fine—very fine', he added, smiling.

'Does he really not understand or—even worse—doesn't he want to understand?' I thought, and tears came into my eyes.

'I'll tell you what wouldn't have happened', I suddenly blurted out. 'I wouldn't now be punished by your indifference, contempt even—without being guilty of anything. You wouldn't suddenly have deprived me of all that was dear to me—that's what wouldn't have happened!'

'What is the matter with you, my dear?' he said, as if not understanding what I was saying.

'No, let me speak. . . . You took away from me your trust, your love, even your respect; because I don't believe you love me now, not after the way you loved me before. No, I must get it all off my chest now—all that has been tormenting me for so long.' I interrupted him again. 'Am I really to blame because I didn't know life, and because you left me to find it out for myself. . . ? Am I really to blame because now, when I have understood what I must do, when for almost a year now, I have been fighting to return to you, you push me away, as if you didn't understand what I want, and all in such a way that it is impossible to reproach you, whereas I am both guilty and unhappy! Yes, you want to throw me back again into that life which could have been responsible for our unhappiness, both yours and mine.'

'But how did I show you this?' he asked, with genuine alarm and amazement.

'Didn't you say to me only yesterday—and don't you always say that I won't be able to settle down here, and that for the winter we must again go to Petersburg, which I hate?' I went on. 'Instead of giving me some support, you avoid all frankness, all sincerity or tenderness. And then, when my downfall is complete, you will reproach me and rejoice over it.'

'Wait, wait', he said, sternly and coldly. 'What you are saying now is wicked. It only shows that you are ill-disposed towards me, that you don't . . .'

'That I don't love you? Say it! Say it!' I concluded, and tears streamed down my cheeks. I sat down on the bench and covered my face with a handkerchief.

'That's the way he understood me!' I thought, trying to hold back the sobs which were choking me. 'But our old love is over, is over!' a voice in my heart was saying. He did not come towards me, did not comfort me. He had taken offence at what I had said. His voice was calm and dry.

'I don't know what you are reproaching me with', he began. 'If it's with no longer loving you as I did . . .'

'Did!' I said into my handkerchief, and bitter tears fell on it in still greater profusion.

'Then, time and we ourselves are to blame. There is a season for every love. . . .' He was silent for a moment. 'And, to tell you the whole truth, if you still want frankness, just as that year when I first got to know you I spent sleepless nights thinking of you, and created my own love, and that love grew and grew in

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my heart, so, in Petersburg and abroad, I spent dreadful nights awake destroying, breaking up that love which tormented me. I did not destroy it, I only destroyed what was tormenting me; I regained my peace of mind and I love you all the same, but with a different love.'

'Yes, you call that love, but it's torment', I said. 'Why did you let me lead a social life, if you thought it so harmful that you ceased to love me because of it?'

'Not because of a social life, my dear', he said.

'Why didn't you make use of your authority?' I went on. 'Why didn't you restrain me, why didn't you kill me? I would be better off now than I am, deprived of everything my happiness was made up of. I would be better off, and not feel ashamed.'

I again burst into sobs and covered my face.

At that moment Katia and Sonia, gay and wet, loudly talking and laughing, came out on to the terrace, but seeing us, they grew silent and left immediately.

We were silent for a long time after they had gone. I had shed all my tears, and began to feel better. I looked at him. He was sitting leaning his head on his hand, and wanted to say something in answer to my look, but he only sighed heavily and put his head on his hand again.

I came up to him and took his hand away. He turned to look at me thoughtfully.

'Yes', he began, as if continuing his thoughts. 'All of us—especially you women—must live through all the nonsense of life ourselves in order to come back to life itself; and one can never believe someone else. At that time, you were far from having lived through all that

delightful and charming nonsense which I admired in you, and I left you to live it out, feeling that I did not have the right to stand in your way, although—for me—the time for that sort of thing was already long past.'

'Why, then, did you live through that nonsense with me and let me live through it, if you love me?' I said.

'Because, even if you had wanted to, you couldn't have believed me; you had to find out for yourself—and you did.'

'You reasoned, you reasoned a great deal', I said. 'You loved too little.'

We were silent once more.

'It was cruel, what you just said, but it was true', he went on, suddenly getting up and walking up and down the terrace. 'Yes, it's true. I was to blame', he added, stopping opposite me: 'I should either not have allowed myself to love you at all, or I should have loved you more simply.'

'Let's forget it all', I said, timidly.

'No, what has passed cannot return again, you can never bring it back', and his voice softened as he said this.

'It has come back already', I said, putting my hand on his shoulder.

He took my hand away and pressed it.

'No, I was not speaking the truth when I said that I didn't regret the past. I do; I regret, I weep for that old love which is no longer, and which can no longer be. Who is to blame for this, I don't know. Love remains, but it is not the same love; its place remains, but the old love has disappeared through suffering, and

there's no strength or sap in the new one; memories and gratitude remain, but . . .'

'Don't talk like that', I interrupted. 'Let everything be as it was before once more. It is possible, isn't it?' I asked, looking into his eyes. But his eyes were clear and calm, and did not look deeply into mine.

'Even as I was speaking I felt that what I wished for and what I was asking of him was impossible. He smiled calmly, gently, with what seemed to me an old man's smile.

'How young you still are, and I am so old', he said. 'I have no longer in me what you are seeking; why deceive oneself?' he added, continuing to smile in the same way.

I stood beside him in silence, and in my heart I began to feel calmer.

'Don't let's try to repeat life', he went on. 'Don't let's lie to ourselves. And if the old worries and emotions no longer exist—well, thank God for that! We needn't seek anything nor worry about anything any more. We have already found it, and enough happiness has fallen to our lot. Now we must stand aside and give way to—look, to whom!' he said, pointing to the nurse who had come towards us with Vanya, and was standing at the door of the terrace. 'So there, dear friend', he concluded, bending my head towards his and kissing it. Not a lover, but an old friend was kissing me.

From the garden the scented freshness of night was rising more and more strongly and sweetly, ever more solemn grew the sounds and the silence, and the sky

was studded with more and more stars. And suddenly, as I looked at him, I felt easier in my heart, as if the painful moral nerve which had made me suffer had been removed. I suddenly understood clearly and calmly that the feeling of that time had passed irrevocably away like that time itself, and that it was not only impossible to retrieve it, but that it would be painful and embarrassing to do so. And indeed, had it really been so perfect, that time which had seemed to me so happy? And it was all so long ago already!

'Well, it's time for tea!' he said, and we went into the drawing-room together. At the doors we again met the nurse with Vanya. I took the child in my arms, covered up his little bare red legs, pressed him to me and, scarcely touching him with my lips, I kissed him. He stirred his little hands with spread-out, wrinkled fingers, as if in sleep, and opened dim eyes as if looking for or remembering something; suddenly those eyes came to rest on me, the spark of a thought shone in them, the fat, parted lips started to pucker, and broke into a smile. 'Mine, mine, mine!' I thought, pressing him to my breast with happy intensity in every limb, and with difficulty restraining myself from hurting him. I kissed his cold little legs, his tummy, his hands, and his downy head barely covered with hair. My husband came towards me, and I quickly covered up the baby's face and then uncovered it again.

'Ivan Sergeich!' said my husband, touching him under the chin with his finger. But I quickly covered Ivan Sergeich up again. No one but I should look at him for long. I glanced at my husband; his eyes were

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laughing as they met mine, and for the first time for many months I looked at him light-heartedly and joyfully.

From that day my romance with my husband was over, the old feeling became a dear, irretrievable memory, and a new feeling of love for my children and for the father of my children laid the foundation for another, this time completely different, happy life, which I am still living at the present moment. . . .

The Devil

'But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

'And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.'

St Matthew V, 28, 29, 30.

I

A BRILLIANT career lay in store for Evgeny Irtyenev. Everything about him indicated that he would have one. He had had an excellent home upbringing, and he had brilliantly concluded his studies at the Law Faculty of St Petersburg University; his father, who had died not long before, had had the best possible social connections, and Evgeny had even started his work at the Ministry under the patronage of the minister himself. He had means, too; quite considerable means, even if uncertain. His father had lived both abroad and in St Petersburg, and had given Evgeny and his elder son, Andrei, who was in the Cavalier Guards, six thousand roubles a year each, and had himself squandered large sums together with their mother. He used to visit his estate in the summer only, when he would spend two months there, but he had taken no interest in its affairs and had left everything to his agent, in whom he had complete confidence, but who had not taken any interest in the estate either.

When the brothers began dividing up the property after their father's death, they found the debts to be so considerable that their lawyer advised them to keep only their grandmother's estate, valued at a hundred thousand roubles, and to renounce the rest of the inheritance. However, a neighbouring landowner who had had dealings with old Irtyenev—that is, had been

his creditor, and had come to St Petersburg in connection with this—said that, in spite of debts, it would be possible to improve the business and still keep a considerable fortune. All they had to do was to sell the timber and some waste land, devote themselves to the business, settle down in the country, and run the estate intelligently and economically. They could then keep Semyonovskoye, a veritable gold-mine with its ten thousand acres of arable land, a sugar refinery, and five hundred acres of meadowland.

And so Evgeny, who had visited the estate in the spring (his father had died in Lent), and had inspected it all, decided to retire, settle down in the country with his mother, and manage the business in order to try to keep the main estate. He made the following arrangement with his brother, with whom he was not on particularly good terms: he promised to pay him four thousand roubles a year, or a lump sum of eighty thousand roubles, in exchange for which his brother renounced his share of the inheritance.

So Evgeny did all this, and when he had settled down in the large house with his mother, he began to run the estate enthusiastically and yet carefully.

It is commonly thought that conservative-minded people are as a rule old, whereas innovators are young. This is not quite true. Conservatively minded people are most commonly young men—young men who want to live, but who neither think nor have time to think how to live, and who therefore choose the old way of life as a model.

And thus it happened to Evgeny. Having settled in

the country, his dream and his ideal was to resurrect the way of life which had existed, not in his father's time, for his father had been a bad landlord, but in his grandfather's time. And he tried now, though of course with changes in tune with the times, to resurrect the general spirit of his grandfather's lifetime both in the house and in the garden and on the estate—everything on a grand scale, prosperity for everyone around, order and contentment. A great deal of work was necessary in order to achieve this: he had to satisfy both the demands of his creditors and of the banks, and therefore to sell land and defer payments; he also had to obtain money with which to run the huge estate at Semyonovskoye with its ten thousand acres of arable land and the sugar refinery, either by employing outside workers or with his own men; and he had to make both the house and the garden look as if they were not neglected and decayed.

There was a great deal of work, but Evgeny had a great deal of strength, both physical and spiritual. He was twenty-six years old, of medium height and strongly-built, with his muscles developed by gymnastics; he was a full-blooded type with a high colour, glistening teeth and lips, and fine soft, wavy hair. His only physical defect was his short sight, which he had himself made worse by wearing glasses, and he could now no longer dispense with pince-nez, which had already made little furrows above the bridge of his nose. Such was his physical aspect, while his spiritual side was of a kind that made people like him more the more they knew him. His mother, who had always

loved him more than anyone else, made him, now that her husband had died, the centre of her whole life, let alone all her affections. But his mother was not the only one to love him in this way. His school and university friends had a special affection for him, but one mingled with respect. He affected strangers, too, in the same way. It was impossible not to believe him, it was impossible to conceive of deceit or untruth in connection with a face and, above all, eyes which were so open and honest.

In fact, his whole personality was of considerable assistance to him in business. A creditor who would have refused another, trusted him. A bailiff, an overseer or a peasant who would have deceived or played a dirty trick on anyone else, forgot to be deceitful under the pleasant impression made by contact with this kind, simple and, above all, frank man.

It was the end of May. Evgeny somehow managed to settle his affairs in town, succeeding in freeing the waste land from mortgage so that he could sell it to a merchant, and then borrowed money from that very same merchant in order to renew his stock—horses, bulls, carts and so on—as well as and mainly in order to build a farm, which represented an essential. The work began. Timber arrived, the carpenters were already at work, eighty cart-loads of manure were brought up—but up till then everything hung by a thread.

II

IN the midst of all these worries a circumstance arose which, although unimportant, nevertheless worried Evgeny at the time. He passed his youth as all young, healthy, unmarried men do—in other words he had relations with all types of women. He was not a debauchee, as he was fond of saying, but neither was he a monk. However, he only indulged himself in this way in so far as it was essential for his physical health and freedom of mind, as he said. This had started when he was sixteen years old, and up till now everything had gone satisfactorily—satisfactorily in the sense that he had not indulged in debauch, had never lost his head, and had never caught any disease. In St Petersburg he had at first had a seamstress, then she had gone to the bad, and he had made other arrangements. And this side of his life had been so well provided for that it had not embarrassed him.

Then, after he had been living in the country for nearly two months, he did not quite know what to do about it. His involuntary continence was beginning to have a bad effect on him. Did he really have to go to town because of it? And where to? How? This was the only thing that worried Evgeny Irtyenev, but as he was convinced that it was essential for him and that he needed it, he really did begin to need it, and he felt that he was not free and that, against his will, his glances followed every young woman he saw.

He felt that it would not be right for him to live

with a woman or a girl in his own home, on his own estate. He knew, from stories he had heard, that both his father and his grandfather had, in this respect, been quite different from other landowners of the time, and had never had any dealings of that sort with serfs in their own homes, and he decided that he would not do that; but later, as he felt himself to be more and more tied and imagined with horror what might happen to him in a small provincial town, and realising that anyway there were no longer any serfs, he decided that it would be possible to come to some arrangement there. Only it must be done so that no one would know about it, and not for the sake of debauchery, but just for his health's sake, he told himself. Having made up his mind, he began to feel even more restless; while talking to the bailiff or to the peasants or to the carpenter he would involuntarily bring the conversation round to women and, if the conversation did touch on the subject of women, then he would try to keep it on that subject. As to women themselves—he stared at them more and more.

III

BUT it was one thing to decide this in his own mind, and quite another to put it into practice. It was impossible for him to approach a woman about it himself. Who in? Where? It must be done through someone, but to whom could he turn?

It once so happened that he dropped in for a drink of water at the forester's hut. The keeper had been a huntsman of his father's. Evgeny Irtyenev was chatting with him, and the keeper began telling him old stories about hunting sprees. And it occurred to Evgeny that it would be a good idea to arrange something here, in the forester's hut, or in the wood. Only he did not know how to set about it, and whether old Danila would be willing to undertake it. 'Perhaps such a suggestion would horrify him, and I shall be disgraced, or perhaps he would quite simply agree to it.' Thus he thought, listening to Danila's tales. Danila was telling him how they once had been camping in a field that belonged to the priest's wife, and how he had brought a peasant woman to a man called Pryanichnikov.

'I can', thought Evgeny.

'Your Dad, God rest his soul, didn't go in for such nonsense.'

'I can't', thought Evgeny, but in order to find out he said:

'How is it that you went in for such wickedness?'

'Why, what's bad about it? She was glad, and my Fedor Zakharych was ever so pleased. I got a trouble. What do you expect me to do, after all? He was made of flesh and blood, too. Ate and drank like everyone else.'

'Yes, I can say it', thought Evgeny, and set about it straight away.

'You know', he felt himself blushing scarlet. 'You know, Danila, I'm becoming a nervous wreck.'

Danila smiled.

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'I'm not a monk, after all—I'm used to it.'

He felt that everything he said was silly, but was pleased because Danila approved.

'Why, you should have said so long ago! Of course it can be arranged. You just tell me who it is you want.'

'Oh, really, it's all the same to me. So long as she's not monstrously ugly, and is healthy, of course.'

'I understand!' Danila broke in. He thought for a moment. 'Oh, I know of a nice little bit', he began. Evgeny blushed again. 'A nice little bit. Just fancy! They married her off in the autumn', Danila began to whisper, 'and he can't do anything. Ah, that's fair game for anyone.'

Evgeny even winced from shame.

'No, no', he broke in, 'I don't need that sort of thing at all. What I need, on the contrary' (what did he mean by 'on 'the contrary'? 'on the contrary, I just need someone healthy, and as little fuss as possible—a soldier's wife, or something. . . .

'I know. That means Stepanida's what you need. Her husband is away in town, she's just like a soldier's wife. And she's a fine, clean woman. You'll be pleased. And as a matter of fact, I said to her the other day "You go . . .", but she . . .'

'Well, when then?'

'Well, tomorrow, if you like. Look: I'll go and get some tobacco and drop in there, and at dinner-time you come along here or go to the bath-house, behind the vegetable garden. There's no one there. And anyway, after dinner everyone is asleep.'

'All right, then.'

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On his way home Evgeny began to feel terribly worried. 'What will it be? What does it mean—a peasant woman? Perhaps something monstrous, frightful? No, they are lovely', he said to himself, remembering those at whom he had stared. 'But what shall I say, what shall I do?'

For the whole of that day he was not himself; but the next day, at twelve o'clock, he went to the forester's hut. Danila stood at the door, and nodded his head silently but significantly in the direction of the wood. The blood rushed to Evgeny's head, he felt his heart beat, and went towards the vegetable garden. There was no one there. He went to the bath-house—still no one; he looked inside, came out again, and suddenly heard the snapping of a broken branch. He looked round; she was standing in a thicket, beyond a little gully. He rushed there, through the gully which was full of nettles, but he did not notice them. He stumbled, his pince-nez fell off his nose, and he ran up the hillock opposite. In a white embroidered blouse, a reddish-brown skirt, and with a bright red kerchief—there she stood, baretoot, fresh, sturdy, beautiful, timidly smiling.

'There's a path there—you should have gone round', she said. 'I've been here a long time. Ever so long.'

He went up to her and, looking round, touched her.

A quarter of an hour later they separated; he found his pince-nez, called in on Danila and, in answer to his question: 'Are you satisfied, sir?', he gave him a rouble, and went home.

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He was satisfied. He had only felt shame at first, and then it had disappeared. And everything had been all right. All right, mainly, because he now felt light, calm, vigorous. He had not even looked at her very closely. He remembered that she was clean, fresh, not bad-looking, and simple, unaffected.

'Who is she, I wonder?' he said to himself. 'Did he say she was a Pechnikov? Which Pechnikov can it be? There are two families of them, I believe. It must be the daughter-in-law of the old man, Mikhaila. Yes, probably that's the one. He has a son living in Moscow, I think. I'll ask Danila about it sometime.'

From then on this formerly important unpleasantness of country life—involuntary continence—was eliminated. Evgeny's freedom of mind was no longer destroyed, and he was free to devote himself to his work.

But the work which Evgeny had undertaken was not at all easy: sometimes it seemed to him that he would not be able to hold out, and that it would end by his having to sell the estate after all, that all his labours would be in vain and, worst of all, that it would be clear that he had not been able to stick it out, that he had not been able to go through with what he had undertaken. This worried him more than anything else. He had hardly succeeded in stopping up one hole somehow when another would open up unexpectedly.

During all this time new and previously unknown debts of his father's kept turning up. It was clear that, in the last years, his father had borrowed indiscriminately, wherever he could. In May, at the time of the

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division of the property, Evgeny had thought that, at last, he knew everything. But suddenly, in the middle of the summer, he received a letter which informed him that there was another debt of twelve thousand roubles due to a widow named Yesipova. There was no promissory note, only a simple I.O.U. which, according to the attorney, could be disputed. But it never even entered Evgeny's head that he might refuse to pay a genuine debt of his father's just because a document could be disputed. He only had to know for certain if it really was a genuine debt.

'Mamma! Who is this Valeriya Vladimirovna Yesipova?' he asked his mother when they met, as usual, for dinner.

'Yesipova? She was grandfather's ward. Why?'

Evgeny told his mother about the letter.

'I think she ought to be ashamed of herself. Your father gave her so much.'

'But do we owe her anything?'

'Well, how shall I put it? There is no debt. Papa in his boundless kindness.'

'Yes, but did Papa consider it a debt?'

'I can't tell you. I don't know. I know how difficult it is for you, anyway.'

Evgeny saw that Maria Pavlovna did not know herself how to say it, and was, as it were, sounding him.

'This makes me realise that I must pay', her son said. 'I'll go over and see her tomorrow, and I'll ask if it wouldn't be possible to defer payment.'

'Oh, how sorry I am for you. But, you know, I think it would be the best thing to do. Tell her that she must

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'wait', said Maria Pavlovna, obviously relieved and proud of her son's decision.

Evgeny's difficulties were aggravated by the fact that his mother, who lived with him, did not understand them at all. All her life she had been accustomed to live on such a large scale that she could not even imagine her son's actual position, which was that any day they might find they had nothing left, that he would be obliged to sell everything and live and keep his mother on what he could earn, which, in his position, would be at the most two thousand roubles. She did not understand that the only way to save themselves from such a predicament was by cutting down every kind of expense, and therefore she could not understand why Evgeny was so reluctant to spend anything on trifles, on wages for the gardeners and coachmen, on the servants, and even on food. In addition, like most widows, she 'cherished a feeling of veneration for her deceased husband's memory—a feeling which was far from resembling what she had felt towards him when he had been alive—and she would not countenance the thought that anything which he had done might have been bad or could be changed.

With great difficulty Evgeny kept up both the garden and the greenhouse with two gardeners, and the stables with two coachmen. Maria Pavlovna, however, naïvely imagined that by not complaining about the food, which was prepared by an old chef, and about the paths in the park, not all of which were kept clean, and because they only had one boy instead

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of footmen, she was doing everything that a mother could who was sacrificing herself for her son. Thus it was with this new debt, which Evgeny saw as almost the final blow to all his undertakings, but which Maria Pavlovna saw only as an opportunity for showing Evgeny's generosity. Also, Maria Pavlovna did not worry particularly about Evgeny's material situation because she was convinced that he would make a brilliant match which would redeem everything. And he could make a very brilliant match. She knew of a dozen families who would be delighted if he married their daughter, and she wanted to arrange this as soon as possible.

IV

EVGENY dreamed of marriage himself, only not in the same way as his mother did: the idea of making marriage a means of mending his affairs was abhorrent to him. He wanted to marry honestly, for love. He, too, looked attentively at the girls whom he met and whom he already knew, assessing their suitability, but his fate had not been decided. Meanwhile, his relations with Stepanida continued, and had even acquired the character of something established, which he had not at all expected. Evgeny was so far from being a libertine, it was so unpleasant for him to carry on with this secret and—he felt—base affair, that he never felt at his ease, and even after their first meeting he hoped not to see

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Stepanida any more; but it turned out that after a certain time he again fell a prey to the same uneasiness which he ascribed to this. And this time his uneasiness was no longer impersonal; all the time his imagination was filled with those same black, shining eyes, the same deep voice saying 'Ever so long', the same smell of freshness and strength, the same high bosom lifting up the blouse, and all of this in the same walnut and maple thicket, flooded with bright light. Suppressing his feeling of shame, he again appealed to Danila, and again a meeting was arranged at mid-day, in the wood. This time Evgeny looked at her more closely, and everything about her seemed attractive to him. He tried to talk to her, and asked about her husband. He was indeed Mikhaila's son, and was a coachman in Moscow.

'Well, then, how do 'you . . . ?' Evgeny wanted to ask how it was that she was unfaithful to him.

'How do I what?' she asked. She was obviously intelligent and shrewd.

'Well how is it that you come and see me?'

'Oh, that!' she said cheerfully. 'He's having his fun there, I suppose. Why shouldn't I?'

Obviously she was putting on an air of jauntiness and dash. And Evgeny thought it charming. But all the same, he did not fix another meeting with her himself. Even when she suggested it in order to avoid acting through Danila, to whom she seemed to be unfriendly, Evgeny did not agree. He hoped that this meeting would be the last. She attracted him. He thought that such intercourse was essential for him and that there

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was nothing bad in it; but in his heart of hearts there was a sterner judge who did not approve of it, and who hoped that this would be the last time, or, if he did not hope this, at least he did not want to take part in this affair and arrange it next time for himself.

Thus passed the summer, in the course of which they saw each other about ten times, and each time through Danila. Once it happened that she could not come, because her husband had arrived, and Danila proposed another woman. Evgeny refused with repugnance. Then her husband went away, and the meetings continued as before, at first through Danila, though later Evgeny named the time himself, and she would come with another woman, Prokhorova, as peasant women could not walk about alone. Once, at the very time arranged for their meeting, a family came to see Maria Pavlovna with the girl she had her eye on as a match for Evgeny, and he simply could not escape. As soon as he could get away he made as if to go to the threshing-floor and went round to the meeting-place by a path leading to the wood. She was not there. But, at the place where they usually met, wherever her hand had been able to reach everything was broken—the wild-cherry, the hazel bushes, even the young maple tree which was as thick as a stake. She had waited for him, become worried, then annoyed and, in play, had left him a reminder of herself. He stood there for a while, and then went to Danila to ask him to tell her to come the next day. She came, and was the same as usual.

So passed the summer. Meetings were always

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arranged in the wood, and only once, when it was nearly autumn, in the threshing-barn in the back yard. It never even entered Evgeny's head that this relationship had any significance for him. He did not even think about it. He gave her money, and that was all. He neither knew nor gave a thought to the fact that the whole village already knew about it and envied her, and that her sense of sin, under the influence of money and the interference of her family, had ceased to exist. It seemed to her that if people envied her, what she was doing must be all right.

'It's just necessary for my health', thought Evgeny. 'All the same, it's not a good thing, and although no one says anything everyone, or at any rate a good many people, know about it. The woman she goes about with knows. And as she knows, she's probably told others about it, too. But what can I do? I'm behaving badly', thought Evgeny, 'but there's nothing to be done. Anyway, it won't be for long.'

Evgeny was disturbed, mainly, by the thought of her husband. At first, for some reason, he had imagined that her husband must be bad, and this somehow seemed to justify him partly. But then he saw her husband, and was surprised. He was a fine, spruce young fellow, certainly no worse, and probably better, than himself. At the first meeting after this he told her that he had seen her husband and how he had taken to him, and what a fine fellow he was.

'There's not another like him in the village', she said with pride.

This surprised Evgeny, and after that the thought of

her husband troubled him even more. Once, when he happened to be at Danila's, Danila, who was talkative, said to him point-blank:

'Mikhaila asked me the other day: "Is it true that the master is living with my son's wife?" I said: "I don't know. And anyway", I said, "better with the master than with a peasant".'

'Well, and what did he say?'

'Oh, nothing, just said: "You wait, I'll show her if I get to know of it".'

'Of course, if her husband were to come back, I'd give it up', thought Evgeny.

But her husband was living in town, and for the time being their relationship continued.

'When I have to, I'll break it off, and nothing will remain of it', he thought.

And he never doubted it, because he was greatly occupied during the summer with many different things: setting up the new farm, the harvest, the building and, above all, the repayment of his debt and the sale of the waste land. These were questions that absorbed all his thoughts, sleeping and waking. All that was real life, whereas his intercourse—he did not even call it a liaison—with Stepanida was something insignificant. It is true that when the desire to see her took him, it took him with such force that he could think of nothing else, but it did not last long, he would arrange a meeting, and then again forget her for a week, sometimes for a month.

In the autumn Evgeny often went to town, and there made friends with the Annenski family. The

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Annenskis had a daughter who had only just left school. And there, to the great distress of Maria Pavlovna, Evgeny—as she said—sold himself too cheaply, fell in love with Liza Annenskaya, and proposed to her.

From that time his relations with Stepanida ceased.

V

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to explain why Evgeny chose Liza Annenskaya, just as it is never possible to explain why a man chooses one woman rather than another. There was an abundance of reasons, both positive and negative. One reason was the fact that she was not a very rich match, such as his mother would have made for him; another reason was that she was naïve and pathetic in her relationship with her mother, and also because she was not a beauty who took great care of her appearance, and yet she was by no means ugly. But the main reason was that their friendship began at a time when Evgeny was ripe for marriage. He fell in love because he knew that he would get married.

At first Evgeny simply liked Liza Annenskaya, but when he had decided that she was to be his wife, he experienced a much stronger feeling towards her; he felt that he was in love.

Liza was tall, thin and long. Everything about her was long: her face and her nose—not jutting out from,

but going along, her face—and her fingers, and her feet. Her complexion was very delicate, white, but a little sallow, touched with soft colour; her hair was long, blonde, soft and wavy, and she had beautiful, clear eyes, which were gentle and trusting. Evgeny was particularly struck by her eyes, and when he thought of Liza he saw her clear, gentle, trusting eyes before him.

Such was her physical appearance; he knew nothing about her spiritual side, but only saw her eyes, and it seemed as if they told him everything he needed to know—and this is what they told him:

Even when she had still been at school, from the age of fifteen onwards, Liza had continually fallen in love with every attractive man, and she was animated and happy only when she was in love. In exactly the same way, when she left school, she fell in love with Evgeny as soon as she got to know him, and it was the fact that she was in love that gave her eyes the particular expression that so captivated Evgeny.

During that very winter she had already been in love with two other young men at the same time, and she had blushed and been thrilled not only when they came into the room, but even at the mention of their names. But later, when her mother hinted to her that Irtyenev seemed to have serious intentions, she fell so much more in love with him that she became almost indifferent to the other two. When Irtyenev began visiting them, when, at balls and gatherings, he danced with her more than with others and obviously only wanted to know if she loved him—then her love for

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Irtyenev became morbid; she saw him in her dreams, whether she was asleep or awake in her dark room, and all the others ceased to exist for her. And when he proposed to her and had received her parents' blessing, when they had kissed and become engaged—then she had no other thoughts but for him, no other wishes than to be with him, to love him, and to be loved by him. She was proud of him, and moved by him and by herself and by her love for him, and she felt ready to swoon and melt with love for him. The more he knew her, the more he, too, loved her. He had never expected to encounter such love, and it strengthened his feeling even more.

VI

BEFORE spring he came to Semyonovskoye to look over the estate and to give orders, in particular concerning the house which was being redecorated for the wedding.

Maria Pavlovna was not pleased with her son's choice, but only because the match was not as brilliant as it might have been, and because she did not like Varvara Alexeyevna, his future mother-in-law. Whether she was a good or a bad woman she did not know and could not make up her mind, but the fact that she was not well-bred, not *comme il faut*, not, as Maria Pavlovna told herself, a *lady*, she had seen from

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their very first meeting, and this distressed her. It distressed her because she valued breeding from habit, knew that Evgeny was very sensitive about it, and foresaw much distress for him because of it. She liked the girl herself. She liked her, mainly, because Evgeny liked her. She had to love her. And Maria Pavlovna was quite ready to do so and do so perfectly sincerely.

Evgeny found his mother gay and pleased. She was arranging everything in the house, and was intending to go away herself as soon as he brought his young bride there. Evgeny tried to persuade her to stay on, and the question remained undecided. As usual, in the evening after tea, Maria Pavlovna played patience. Evgeny sat beside her, helping her. This was the time of their most intimate heart-to-heart conversations. Having finished one game of patience and without starting another, Maria Pavlovna looked up at Evgeny and, rather hesitantly, began thus:

‘Oh, I wanted to say something to you, Genya. You understand . . . I don’t know . . . but generally speaking I wanted to give you some advice, that before you get married you must without fail put an end to all your bachelor affairs, so that nothing could worry you or—God forbid!—your wife. Do you understand me?’

And indeed, Evgeny instantly understood that Maria Pavlovna was alluding to his relations with Stepanida, which had ceased in the autumn, and to which his mother, as lonely women do, attached far greater significance than they had, in fact, possessed. Evgeny blushed, not so much from shame as from annoyance that the well-meaning Maria Pavlovna should meddle—

lovingly, it is true—but meddle all the same in things which did not concern her and which she did not and could not understand. He said that he had nothing to hide, and that he had always behaved in such a way that nothing could interfere with his marriage.

‘Well, that’s splendid, darling. You must not be offended at what I said, Genya’, said Maria Pavlovna, growing embarrassed.

But Evgeny saw that she had not finished and had not said what she wanted to say. And so it turned out. After a slight pause she began to tell him how, while he had been away, she had been asked to be godmother to . . . the Pechnikovs’ child.

Evgeny now flushed crimson, no longer from annoyance or even shame, but from some sort of strange sense of importance of what was about to be said to him, an involuntary sense which did not at all agree with his reasonings. It came out precisely as he had expected. Maria Pavlovna, as if she had no other aim than conversation, told him that that year nothing but boys were being born—which probably meant a war. Both the Vasins and the Pechnikovs—the young woman’s first child, also a boy. Maria Pavlovna wanted to say this unobtrusively, but herself became embarrassed when she saw her son’s red face and the nervous way in which he took off his pince-nez, tapped them and put them on again, and hurriedly lit a cigarette. She was silent. He was silent, too, and could not think of any way of breaking the silence. So that they both understood that they understood each other.

‘Yes, when you live in the country the great thing

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is to be fair; there must not be any favouritism, the way it used to be with your uncle.'

'Mother, darling', Evgeny said suddenly, 'I know why you are saying all this. You are worrying yourself for nothing. My future married life is sacred to me, and I shall, in no circumstances, destroy it. As to what happened when I was a bachelor, that's all finished with. And I never took on any ties of any sort, and no one has any claims on me.'

'Well, I'm glad', said his mother. 'I know what high standards you have.'

Evgeny took these words of his mother's as a well-deserved tribute, and was silent.

The next morning he was driving into town thinking of his fiancée, and of everything under the sun except Stepanida. But, as if on purpose to remind him, as he was driving up to the church he began meeting people returning from it on foot and in carts. He met old Matvei with Semyon, children, young girls, and then two peasant women, one elderly and the other smartly dressed and wearing a bright red kerchief; there was something familiar about her. She was walking lightly, cheerfully, and carrying a baby in her arms. He drew alongside them, the elder woman bowed to him, standing still in the old-fashioned way, but the young woman with the child only inclined her head, and from beneath her kerchief there shone the familiar, smiling, gay eyes.

'Yes, it's her, but it's all over, and there's no need to look at her. And perhaps the child is mine', the thought flashed through his mind. 'No, what nonsense. There

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was her husband, she used to go to him.' He did not even stop to calculate. He was so certain that it had been necessary for his health, he had paid her money, and nothing more; no ties of any sort existed between him and her, there had been none, there could be none, and there should be none. It was not that he was smothering the voice of conscience—no, his conscience said absolutely nothing to him. And he did not once think of her again after his conversation with his mother and this meeting. Nor did he meet her again.

In the first week after Easter Evgeny was married in town, and he and his young bride left immediately for the country. The house had been arranged in the way in which houses usually are arranged for the newly-wed. Maria Pavlovna wanted to leave, but Evgeny, and especially Liza, coaxed her to stay. However, she moved into a wing of the house.

And so began a new life for Evgeny.

VII

His first year of married life was a difficult one for Evgeny. It was difficult because his business affairs, which he had somehow contrived to lay aside during his engagement, now, after his marriage, all suddenly overwhelmed him.

He was unable to extricate himself from his debts. The summer villa was sold, the more urgent debts were

paid, but more debts still remained, and there was no money. The estate brought in a good income, but some of it had to be sent to his brother and some spent on the wedding, so there was no money, and the factory could not run and had to be closed. One way of extricating himself from this situation was to make use of his wife's money. Liza, as soon as she understood her husband's predicament, herself insisted that he should do so. Evgeny agreed, but only on condition that the title-deeds for half the estate should be made out in his wife's name. This was precisely what he did. Of course, he did not do this for the sake of his wife, who was hurt by it, but because of his mother-in-law.

Business with its various fluctuations, success and failure following each other, was one of the things that poisoned Evgeny's life during this first year. Another was his wife's ill-health. In the autumn of this first year, seven months after their marriage, Liza had an accident. She was driving in a gig to meet her husband, who was returning from town, when a usually quiet horse played up, and she was frightened and jumped out. Her jump was relatively fortunate—she might have been caught in the wheel—but she was already expecting a child. In the night her pains started, she had a miscarriage, and was unable to recover for a long time afterwards. The loss of the expected child, his wife's illness and the disorganisation of his life resulting from it and, above all, the presence of his mother-in-law who had arrived as soon as Liza fell ill, made this year even more difficult for Evgeny.

But, in spite of these difficulties, towards the end of

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the first year Evgeny felt very cheerful. To begin with, his dearest wish, which was to restore his vanished fortune and resume his grandfather's way of life on a new basis, was being realised, even though the progress was difficult and slow. There was no longer any question of selling the whole estate to cover debts. The main estate, although it was made out in his wife's name, was saved; and if only the beet-crop sold well and for a good price, then the present need and strain could, next year, be transformed into absolute prosperity. That was one thing.

Another was the fact that, no matter how much he had expected of his wife, he had never expected to find in her what he had, in fact, found: it was not what he had expected, but it was much better. The transports and raptures of lovers were absent, or were very unconvincing, however much he tried to bring them about; but what he did feel was something quite different, the feeling that life had not only become gayer and pleasanter, but easier to live. He did not know the reason for this, but it was so.

The reason for it was that she had decided as soon as they had become engaged that, of all the people in the world, there was but one Evgeny Irtycnev, and he was on a higher level, more intelligent, purer, nobler than anyone else, and that therefore everyone was under an obligation to honour and serve this Irtycnev. But as it was impossible to make everyone do this, she must do it to the best of her ability herself. This she did, and therefore all her mental faculties were directed to finding out or guessing what he liked, and then doing

it—no matter what it was nor how difficult it might be.

She had, too, something which makes up the principal charm of communion with a woman who loves one—she had, thanks to her love for her husband, a perception of his mind which amounted to second sight. She sensed—often, it seemed to him, better than he did himself—his every state of mind, every shade of feeling that he had, and she acted accordingly. Therefore she never hurt his feelings, but comforted him when he was depressed and encouraged him when he was gay. It was not only his feelings that she understood, but his thoughts, too. Even his thoughts on subjects which were most alien to her—such as those concerning agriculture, the factory, judgment of character—she immediately understood, and she could not only discuss these things with him in conversation, but often, as he told her himself, she gave him useful and irreplaceable advice. She looked at everything—things, people, the whole world—only through his eyes. She loved her mother, but as soon as she saw that Evgeny did not like his mother-in-law's interference in their life, she at once took her husband's side, and with such determination that he had to check her.

In addition to all this, she had a great deal of taste, and was tactful and, above all, calm. She never drew attention to what she did; the results of her actions alone were seen—that is, cleanliness, order and refinement always and in everything. Liza had at once understood what constituted her husband's ideal of life, and she tried to attain—and did attain—what he wished for in the running and order of the house. Their marriage

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lacked children, it is true, but there were hopes for this too. In the winter they went to St Petersburg to see a gynaecologist, who assured them that she was perfectly well and could have children.

This desire too was realised. Towards the end of the year she became pregnant again.

The only thing which did not so much spoil as threaten to spoil their happiness was her jealousy—jealousy which she repressed, but from which she often suffered. Not only had Evgeny no right to love anyone, for there was not a woman in the world worthy of him (she never asked herself if she was worthy of him or not), but for that very reason no woman could presume to love him.

VIII

THEY spent their life thus: he always got up early in the morning, attended to his farm business, visited the refinery where some work was proceeding, and sometimes had a look at the fields. At ten o'clock he was back for coffee. Maria Pavlovna, an uncle who was living with them and Liza had coffee on the terrace. After some conversation—which was often very animated—over coffee, they separated again until dinner. They dined at two o'clock, and afterwards they would go for a walk or a drive. In the evening, when he came back from the office, they had a late tea, and sometimes he would read aloud while she worked, or they would

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have some music, or, if they had guests, they would talk. When he went away on business he would write her a letter—and receive one from her—every day. Sometimes she would accompany him on his travels, and this was particularly pleasant. On his and on her name-day visitors would come, and he liked to see how well she knew how to arrange everything so that everyone enjoyed himself. He saw—and heard, too—how everyone admired the young and pretty hostess, and he loved her all the more for it. Everything was going very well. She took her pregnancy lightly, and both of them began, with some diffidence, to make plans for bringing up the child. The ways and means of upbringing were all decided by Evgeny, and all she wished was meekly to carry out his will. Evgeny read a lot of medical books and intended bringing up the child according to all the rules of science. She, of course, agreed with everything and made preparations—sewed warm and cool coverings, and arranged the cradle. Thus came the second year of their marriage, and the second spring

IX

WHITSUN was approaching. Liza was in her fifth month and, although she was being careful, was gay and active. Both mothers, hers and his, were living in the house under the pretext of protecting her and

looking after her, but they only upset her with their bickering. Evgeny was particularly busy with the farm and with a new method of processing sugar-beet on a large scale.

Just before Whit Sunday Liza decided that the house ought to have a thorough spring-clean, which it had not had since Holy Week, and summoned two extra charwomen to help the servants wash the floors and windows, beat the furniture and carpets, and put on fresh covers. The women came in the early morning, put iron pots of water on to boil, and set to work. One of these two women was Stepanida, who had just weaned her little boy, and who had begged the office clerk—with whom she was now carrying on—to let her have some charring work. She wanted to have a good look at her new mistress. Stepanida lived as she had always done, alone, without her husband, and was up to her old tricks; she was carrying on now with the young office clerk; just as she had done before with Danila, who had caught her stealing wood, and then later with the master. She never thought about the master at all. 'He's got a wife now', she thought, 'It would be fine to have a look at the mistress, they say her house is ever so well kept.'

Since the time when he had met her with the child Evgeny had not seen her. She did not go out to daily work because of the child, and she rarely walked about the village. That morning, the day before Whit Sunday, Evgeny got up early, at five o'clock, and rode off to a field on which phosphates were to be spread, and he had left the house before the charwomen had

arrived, while they were still busy with the stoves and boilers.

Evgeny came back to lunch, gay, satisfied, and hungry. He dismounted at the gate, handed his horse over to a gardener who was passing, and walked home hitting the tall grass with his whip and, as one often does, repeating a phrase he had said. The phrase which he was repeating was: 'Phosphates will justify', but what they would justify and to whom he neither knew nor cared.

They were beating carpets on the lawn and had carried out the furniture.

'Good heavens! What a spring-clean Liza has undertaken! Phosphates will justify . . . What a house-wife! Yes, my little house-wife', he said to himself, vividly imagining her in a white dressing-gown and with her face beaming with joy, as it almost always was when he was looking at her. 'Yes, I must change my boots, or else phosphates will justify, I mean it smells of manure, and my little house-wife is expecting. And what is she expecting? Oh, a little Irtyenev, a new one, is growing up inside her, he thought, 'Yes, phosphates will justify.' And, smiling at his thoughts, he put his hand out to open the door of his room.

But before he had time to push the door open it opened itself, and he collided face to face with a peasant woman who was carrying a pail—her skirt tucked up, her legs bare, and her sleeves rolled high up her arms. He stood aside to let her pass; she stood aside too, rearranging her displaced kief with her wet hand.

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'Go on, go on, I won't go in if it's wash . . .' Evgeny began, and suddenly stopped as he recognised her.

Her eyes were smiling as she gaily glanced up at him; and pulling down her skirt, she went out.

'What nonsense is this? What's this? . . . It's not possible!' Evgeny said to himself, frowning and shaking himself as if annoyed by a fly, and angry at having noticed her. He was angry at having noticed her, yet at the same time he could not take his eyes off her body, as she walked deftly and sturdily along, swaying slightly and showing her bare legs; he could not take his eyes off her arms, her shoulders, off the beautiful folds of her blouse, and her red skirt tucked high up over her white calves.

'What on earth am I looking at her for?' he said to himself, dropping his eyes so as not to see her. 'Yes, well, anyway, I must go and get some other boots', and he turned back to go into his room; but he had not taken five steps when, without himself knowing why or at whose behest, he again looked round in order to see her once more. She was going round the corner, and at the same moment she, too, looked round at him.

'Oh, what am I doing!' he cried in his heart, 'She may get ideas. . . . She's probably got them already.'

He went into his wet room. Another woman, old and thin, was there, washing it. Evgeny went on tiptoe through the dirty pools to the wall where the boots were standing, and was just going out of the room when the woman went out too.

'That one has gone out, and the other one, Stepanida,

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will come—alone', someone inside him suddenly began to argue.

'Oh God! What am I thinking? What am I doing?' He seized his boots and ran with them into the hall, where he put them on, cleaned himself up, and went on to the terrace where both mothers were already sitting at coffee. Liza had, apparently, been waiting for him, and came out on the terrace by another door at the same time as he did.

'Oh God! If she, who thinks I'm so honest, so pure, so innocent—if only she knew!' he thought.

Liza met him with a radiant face as she always did. But that day she somehow seemed to him particularly pale, yellow and long, and weak.

X

DURING coffee, as often happened, they had one of those particularly feminine conversations which had no logical cohesion whatsoever, but which apparently had some other kind of cohesion, because it went on uninterruptedly.

Both ladies were bickering, and Liza was skilfully navigating between them.

'I'm so disappointed that they didn't finish washing your room before you came back', she said to her husband, 'but I would so much like it to be done thoroughly.'

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‘Well, and what about you? Did you sleep after I left?’

‘Yes, I did sleep. I feel quite all right.’

‘How can a woman in her condition feel all right in this unbearable heat, when the windows face the sun?’ said Varvara Alexeyevna, her mother. ‘And without blinds or an awning, either. I always have an awning at home.’

‘Yes but there’s shade here from ten o’clock onwards’, said Maria Pavlovna.

‘That’s just why one gets fever. From the damp’, said Varvara Alexeyevna, not noticing that what she was now saying was in direct contradiction to what she had just said. ‘My doctor always used to say that one can never diagnose an illness without knowing the character of the patient. And he should know, because he is the best doctor, and we pay him a hundred roubles. My late husband didn’t hold with doctors, but he never grudged me anything.’

‘How can a man grudge a woman anything when perhaps her life and the child’s depend...’

‘Oh, well, when one has means, the wife need not depend on her husband. A good wife gives in to her husband’, said Varvara Alexeyevna, ‘only Liza is still too weak after her illness.’

‘Oh no, Mamma, I feel perfectly all right. Why didn’t they give you any scalded cream, I wonder?’

‘I don’t want any. I can drink it with fresh cream.’

‘I asked Varvara Alexeyevna. She refused’, said Maria Pavlovna, as if to justify herself.

‘Oh no, I don’t want any today’—and, as if to bring

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an unpleasant conversation to a close and yielding magnanimously, Varvara Alexeyevna turned to Evgeny and said: 'Well, have they spread the phosphates?'

Liza ran off to fetch the cream.

'I don't want any, I don't want any.'

'Liza! Liza! Gently!' said Maria Pavlovna. 'These quick movements are bad for her.'

'Nothing is bad for one if one has peace of mind', said Varvara Alexeyevna, as if she was hinting at something, although she knew herself that her words could not hint at anything.

Liza came back with the cream. Evgeny drank his coffee and listened morosely. He was used to these conversations, but their inanity particularly irritated him today. He wanted to think over what had happened to him, but this prattle prevented him from doing so. When she had finished her coffee Varvara Alexeyevna left, still in a bad mood. Liza, Evgeny and Maria Pavlovna remained alone, and the conversation became simpler and pleasanter. But Liza, with the sensitivity of love, at once noticed that something was worrying Evgeny and asked him whether something unpleasant had happened. He had not been prepared for this question and hesitated a little, before answering that there was nothing the matter. And this answer made Liza all the more thoughtful. That something was worrying him, and was worrying him very much, was to her as clear as the fact that a fly had fallen into the milk, but he did not tell her what it was that was worrying him.

XI

AFTER luncheon they all went their separate ways. Evgeny, as usual, went into his study. He did not begin to read or to write letters; instead he sat down and began to think, smoking one cigarette after another. He was terribly surprised and distressed by this unexpected appearance within him of the unworthy feeling from which he had considered himself to be free since his marriage. Since then he had not once experienced such a feeling either towards her, the woman that he used to know, nor towards any woman other than his own wife. In his heart he had often rejoiced that he had freed himself from it, and then, suddenly, this coincidence, apparently so insignificant, had shown him that he was not free of it. He was tormented now, not because he was again subjugated to this feeling, not because he desired her—he did not even want to think of that—but because the feeling was still alive in him, and he must be on the look-out against it. He had no doubt at all in his heart that he would suppress it.

He had one unanswered letter and a paper to draw up. He sat down at the writing-table and set to work. Having finished it, and having quite forgotten what had been worrying him, he went out to visit the stables. And again, to make matters worse, no sooner had he come out on to the front steps than, whether by accident or by design, she appeared from round the corner, and walked past him, swinging her arms and swaying as she went. Not only did she walk past, she ran past

him as if she were playing with him, and caught up her friend.

The bright noon, the nettles, the back of Danila's hut, and her smiling face as she nibbled a leaf in the shade of the maple trees all rose up again in his imagination. *

'No, I can't leave it at that', he said to himself and, after waiting till the women were out of sight, he went to the office.

It was the dinner hour, and he hoped to be in time to catch the bailiff. He was. The bailiff had just woken up. He stood in the office, stretching himself, and yawning as he looked at the cowman, who was saying something to him.

'Vasili Nikolayevitch!'

'Yes, sir?'

'I want a word with you.'

'What can I do for you?'

'Well, finish what you are doing.'

'Can't you bring it here?' Vasili Nikolayevitch said to the cowman.

'It's heavy, Vasili Nikolayevitch.'

'What's this?' asked Evgeny.

'Well, a cow has calved in the field. It's all right, I'll tell them to harness a horse. Tell Nikolai to harness Lysoukha, and take the dray if there is nothing else.'

The cowman went out.

'Well, you see', Evgeny started, blushing and feeling that he was doing so. 'Well, you see, Vasili Nikolayevitch, when I was a bachelor I sowed some wild oats here. . . . You heard about it, perhaps. . . .'

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Vasili Nikolayevitch's eyes twinkled and, obviously feeling sorry for his master, he said:

'Is it about Stepashka?'

'Well, yes. Well, it's like this—Please, please don't take her on for cleaning work in the house. You understand, it's very unpleasant for me. . . .'

'Oh, well, it looks as if that was Vanya's orders, the office clerk's.'

'Well, please. . . . Well, are they spreading the rest?' said Evgeny, so as to cover his confusion.

'As a matter of fact, I'm just going up there now.'

So that was that. And Evgeny calmed down, in the hope that as he had not seen her for a year, he would not see her in the future either. 'Besides, Vasili Nikolayevitch will tell Ivan, the clerk, and Ivan will tell her, and she will understand that I don't want that sort of thing', Evgeny told himself, and he was pleased that he had taken himself in hand and had told Vasili Nikolayevitch, however difficult it might have been for him. 'Yes, anything is better, anything is better than such doubt, such shame.' He shuddered at the very memory of the crime he had committed in his thoughts.

XII

THE moral effort which he had made in order to overcome his shame and to tell Vasili Nikolayevitch, calmed Evgeny. It seemed to him that it was all over

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now. And Liza noticed immediately that he was quite calm and even more cheerful than usual. 'Probably the mothers' bickering annoyed him. It is hard, in fact, and especially for him with his sensitivity and his generous nature, to listen to such unfriendly insinuations about something or other; it's bad form', thought Liza.

The next day was Whit Sunday. The weather was beautiful, and the peasant women on their way to the wood to weave garlands stopped as usual at their master's house to sing and dance. Maria Pavlovna and Varvara Alexeyevna, elegantly dressed and carrying parasols, came out on the steps, and went up to the dancers. They were accompanied by Evgeny's uncle dressed in a Chinese frock-coat; he was a flabby profligate and drunkard, and was staying at the house that summer.

As always; there was one multi-coloured, bright circle of young women and girls in the centre, while round it, from different sides, like planets and satellites that had broken away from it and were rotating round it, came now the girls holding hands, their new print dresses rustling, now the little boys, laughing at something and running backwards and forwards one after another, now the youths in blue and black coats and caps and red shirts, continually spitting out sunflower-seed husks, now the household servants or onlookers, watching the dancers from a distance. Both ladies went right up to the circle of dancers, and Liza followed them too, in a pale blue dress and with ribbons of the same colour in her hair, and with broad

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sleeves which revealed her long white arms and angular elbows.

Evgeny did not want to go out, but it was ridiculous to hide. He too went out on the steps smoking a cigarette, exchanged greetings with some men and boys, and talked to one of them. Meanwhile the women were bawling a dance song with all their might and were snapping their fingers and clapping their hands and dancing.

'The mistress wants you', said a lad, coming up to Evgeny, who had not heard his wife call. Liza was calling to him to come and look at the dance, at one of the women who was dancing and particularly attracted her. It was Stepashka. There she was, broad, vigorous, rosy-cheeked and gay, wearing a yellow dress and a sleeveless velveteen jerkin and a silk kerchief. Probably she danced well. He saw nothing.

'Yes, yes', he said, taking off his pince-nez and putting them on again. 'Yes, yes', he said. 'I don't seem to be able to avoid her', he thought.

He did not look at her, because he feared her attraction, and precisely because what he had glimpsed of her had seemed to him to be particularly attractive. Besides, he had seen from a gleam in her eye that she had seen him, and that she had seen that he was admiring her. He stood there as long as was necessary for decency's sake and, as soon as he saw that Varvara Alexeyevna had beckoned to her and was saying something nonsensical and hypocritical to her, calling her 'dear', he turned and moved away. He moved away and went back to the house. He went so as not

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to see her but, once upstairs, he went to a window, and so long as the women were at the steps he looked and looked at her, drinking her in.

He ran downstairs, while no one could see him, and slowing down to a walking pace came out on the balcony, and lit a cigarette. He went into the garden as if he was going for a walk, following in the direction in which she had gone. He had hardly taken two steps in the avenue when behind a tree, there flashed a velveteen jerkin on a yellow dress, and a red kerchief. She was going somewhere with another woman. 'Where can they be going to?' he thought.

And suddenly, a violent feeling of lust scorched him and clutched at his heart. As if forced by some alien will Evgeny looked round and went after her.

'Evgeny Ivanovitch! Evgeny Ivanovitch! I was coming to see you, sir', said a voice behind him, and Evgeny, seeing old Samokhin, who was digging a well for him, recovered his senses. He turned round quickly, and went to Samokhin. As he was talking to him Evgeny turned sideways, and saw that Stepashka and the other woman had gone down, apparently, to the well, or under the pretext of going to the well, and then, after staying there a short time, they ran off to join the dancers.

XIII

AFTER his conversation with Samokhin, Evgeny went back to the house with a heavy heart, just as if he had

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committed a crime. To begin with, she had understood him, she thought that he wanted to see her, and she desired it; and then, the other woman—Anna Prokhorova—obviously knew about it.

But the main thing was that he felt he was defeated, that he had no will of his own, but that there was another force which was moving him; that today he had been saved only by luck, and that if not today, then tomorrow or the day after he would nevertheless be damned.

Yes, damned—he could not see it in any other way. To be unfaithful to his young and loving wife, with a peasant woman in the village, for everyone to see, was not this damnation, terrible damnation after which it would be impossible to go on living any longer? No, he must, he must take steps against it.

‘Oh God! Oh God! What must I do? Will I really be damned?’ he said to himself. ‘Can’t I really do something about it? Yes, I must do something about it. I mustn’t think about her’, he ordered himself. ‘Not think about her!’ And he immediately began thinking about her and seeing her before him, and seeing the shadow of the maple trees.

He remembered that he had read about a holy man who, when tempted by a woman on whom he had to lay his hand in order to heal her, had put the other hand into a brazier and burnt his fingers. He remembered this. ‘Yes, I’m ready to burn my fingers rather than be damned.’ And, looking round to see that there was no one in the room, he lit a match and put his finger in the flame. ‘Well, think about her now’, he

said to himself ironically. It began to hurt him; he withdrew his sooty finger, threw the match away, and laughed at himself. 'What nonsense! That's not what I must do. But I must take steps not to see her—I must go away myself, or else have her sent away. Yes, have her sent away! I could offer her husband money to go away to the town or to another village. But people would find out, they'd talk about that. But still, anything's better than this danger. Yes, that's what I must do', he said to himself—and all the time kept his eyes riveted in her direction. 'Where did she go to?' he asked himself suddenly. It seemed to him that she had seen him at the window, had glanced at him, taken some woman by the hand, and had gone towards the garden, vigorously swinging her arm. As a result of his thoughts, and without himself knowing why, he went to the office.

Vasili Nikolayevitch, in a smart frock-coat and his hair well-oiled, was sitting at tea with his wife and a woman guest who was wearing a flowered kerchief.

'Could I have a wor^l with you, Vasili Nikolayevitch?'

'Yes, sir, of course. We've finished tea.'

'No, it would be better if you could come outside a moment.'

'Yes, certainly, just let me take my cap. Tanya, cover up the samovar', said Vasili Nikolayevitch, going out cheerfully.

Evgeny thought that he seemed a bit drunk, but there was nothing to be done, and perhaps it was all to

the good; he might sympathise more with his predicament.

'Vasili Nikolayevitch, I've come about the same thing again', said Evgeny, 'about that woman.'

'Why, what's the matter now? I gave orders that she was not to be taken on again on any account.'

'Well, no, as a matter of fact I was thinking of something else, and I wanted to ask your advice about it. Would it be possible to send them away, to send the whole family away?'

'Where on earth could you send them to?' said Vasili, displeased and sarcastic, it seemed to Evgeny.

'Well, I thought we might give them some money, or even some land at Koltovskoye—anything so long as she isn't here.'

'But how can you send them away? Where can he go, with all his roots here? And anyway, why do you want to do it? What harm is she doing you?'

'Ah, Vasili Nikolayevitch, you understand, it would be dreadful for my wife if she got to hear about it.'

'But who would ever tell her?'

'Oh, but how can I live with a threat like that hanging over my head? And anyway, it's very difficult....'

'What are you worrying about, really? Let bygones be bygones, and anyway, who hasn't slipped up somewhere, sometime?'

'All the same, it would be better if she could be sent away. Couldn't you talk to her husband about it?'

'But there's nothing to talk about. Oh, Evgeny Ivanovitch, why do you worry yourself about it? It's all over and forgotten. All sorts of things happen, after

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all. Anyway, who will say anything bad about you now? After all, you're too highly placed.'

'But you will mention something, all the same?'

'All right, I'll talk to him about it.'

Although he knew in advance that nothing would come of it, this conversation calmed Evgeny to a certain extent. Above all, he felt that worry had led him to exaggerate the danger.

It was not as if he had been going to a rendezvous with her. It would not have been possible, anyway. No, he had just gone for a walk in the garden, and she had just happened to run that way.

XIV*

ON THAT same Whit Sunday, after dinner, Liza was walking in the garden. She went into the meadow, where her husband was taking her to show her the clover. As she was crossing a little ditch, she stumbled and fell. She fell gently, on her side; but she groaned, and in her face her husband read not only fright, but pain. He wanted to help her up but she pushed his hand away.

'No, wait a moment, Evgeny', she said, smiling faintly, and looking up at him from below with what seemed to him a guilty look. 'I've only twisted my foot.'

'There now, I always say', Varvara Alexeyevna

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started. 'How can one go about jumping over ditches in such a condition?'

'Really, Mamma, it's nothing. I'll get up in a minute.'

She got up, with her husband's help, but at the same instant she went pale, and her expression showed alarm.

'No, I don't feel well', and she whispered something to her mother.

'Oh, goodness, what have you done! I said she mustn't walk', cried Varvara Alexeyevna. 'Wait a moment, I'll send someone. She mustn't walk, she must be carried.'

'You're not afraid, Liza? I'll carry you', said Evgeny, putting his left arm around her. 'Put your arm round my neck. That's right.'

And stooping, he put his right arm under her legs and lifted her up. He was never afterwards able to forget the martyred and yet, at the same time, blissful expression on her face.

'It's heavy for you, darling', she said, smiling. 'And there's Mamma, running—tell her she needn't!'

And she leaned towards him and kissed him. She obviously wanted her mother to see him carrying her.

Evgeny shouted to Varvara Alexeyevna not to hurry, and that he would carry Liza back. Varvara Alexeyevna stopped, and began screaming more than ever:

'You'll drop her, you're sure to drop her! You want to finish her off! You haven't any shame!'

'But I can carry her perfectly well.'

'I don't want to see. I can't look on while you are

killing my daughter.' And she ran round a corner of the drive.

'Don't worry, it'll pass', said Liza, smiling.

'I only hope there won't be any after-effects, like the other time.'

'No, I wasn't talking about that. That's nothing. I was talking about Mamma. You're tired—have a rest.'

But although it was heavy for him, Evgeny carried his burden back to the house with pride and joy, and did not hand her over to the maid and the chef, whom Varvara Alexeyevna had found and had sent to meet them. He carried her up to the bedroom and put her on the bed.

'Now, you go', she said, drawing his hand towards her and kissing it. 'Annushka and I will manage.'

Maria Pavlovna, too, came running from the wing. They undressed Liza and put her to bed. Evgeny sat in the drawing-room with a book in his hand, waiting. Varvara Alexeyevna walked past him with such a gloomy and reproachful look that he was terrified.

'Well?' he asked.

'Well? What's the use of asking? Just what you hoped for, probably, making your wife jump across moats.'

'Varvara Alexeyevna!' he cried. 'This is intolerable! If you want to torture people and poison their lives' —he wanted to say: 'then go and do it somewhere else', but he controlled himself. 'Doesn't it hurt you to say it?'

'It's too late now.'

And, triumphantly shaking her mob cap, she went out of the door.

The fall had, in fact, been a bad one. Her leg had been awkwardly twisted, and there was a risk of another miscarriage. Everyone knew that there was nothing to be done, that she must simply lie quietly, but all the same they decided to send for the doctor.

'Dear Nikolai Semyonovitch', Evgeny wrote to the doctor. 'You have always been so kind to us that, I hope, you will not refuse to come to my wife's help. She . . .' and so on. When he had written the letter he went to the stables to arrange for the horses and carriage. One lot of horses had to be prepared to fetch the doctor, and another lot to take him home. When a household is not on a grand scale all this cannot be done at once, but must be thought out. When he had seen to it all himself and sent off the coachman, Evgeny returned home at about ten o'clock. His wife was in bed, and said that she felt perfectly all right, that she had no pain; but Varvara Alexeyevna was sitting by the lamp, which was shaded from Liza. with some music, and was knitting a large red blanket with an expression which clearly said that after what had happened there could be no peace. And no matter what other people might do, she, at least, had done her duty.

Evgeny saw this, but so as to appear as if he had not noticed, he tried to look gay and unconcerned, and recounted how he had collected the horses, and how Kavushka, the mare, had been going splendidly harnessed on the off side.

'Yes, of course, it's just the time to try out a horse

when help is needed. The doctor will probably be thrown into a ditch, too', said Varvara Alexeyevna, looking at her knitting from under her pince-nez and holding it right up to the lamp.

'Well, he had to be sent for somehow, and I did the best I could.'

'Yes, I remember very well how your horses rushed me up to the porch.'

This was a very old invention of hers, and Evgeny now had the rashness to say that it had not been quite like that.

'It's not for nothing that I always say—and how many times I've told the prince, too—that the most difficult thing of all is to live with people who are untruthful, insincere; I can stand anything but that.'

'After all, I'm the man who suffers most, if anyone does', said Evgeny.

'Oh yes, one can see that!'

'What?'

'Nothing. I'm counting stitches.'

At that time Evgeny was standing by the bed. Liza looked at him, took his hand with one of her own moist ones that were lying on the blankets, and squeezed it. 'Please put up with her for my sake. She doesn't prevent us from loving each other', her look seemed to say.

'It doesn't matter', he whispered, and he kissed her long, moist hand, and then her dear eyes, which she closed while he was kissing them.

'Is it really the same thing again?' he said. 'How do you feel?'

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'I'm terrified of saying it, in case I'm mistaken, but I feel that it is alive and will live', she said, looking at her stomach.

'Oh, it's terrifying, terrifying even to think of.'

In spite of Liza's insistence that he should go away, Evgeny spent the night with her, falling asleep with one eye open, and ready to wait on her. But she spent a good night, and if they had not sent for the doctor she might even have got up.

The doctor arrived at dinner-time and, naturally, said that although repeated phenomena might, of course, cause apprehension, yet, strictly speaking, there was no positive indication, but as there was no negative indication either, one could assume, on the one hand, and of course one could assume on the other, too. . . . And therefore she must stay in bed, and although he did not like prescriptions, yet all the same she must take this one and stay in bed. In addition he gave Varvara Alexeyevna a lecture on female anatomy, in the course of which Varvara Alexeyevna nodded her head significantly. When his fee, as usual, had been slipped into his hand, the doctor drove away, and the patient stayed in bed for a week.

XV

EVGENY spent most of his time at his wife's bedside; he waited on her, talked to her, read with her, and, what was most difficult of all, bore Varvara Alexeyevna's

attacks without complaint, and even contrived to turn them into a joke.

But he could not stay at home all the time. Firstly, his wife sent him away, saying that he would get ill if he sat with her all the time, and secondly, the estate was managed in a way that demanded his presence at every step. He could not sit at home, but spent his time in the fields, in the wood, in the garden, on the threshing-floor—and everywhere, not only the thought, but the living image of Stepanida pursued him, so that he rarely forgot about her. But that was not so bad; he might, perhaps, have been able to repress this feeling, but what was far worse was the fact that, whereas formerly he had lived for months without seeing her, now he was continually seeing her and meeting her. She, obviously, had understood that he wanted to renew his relations with her, and she was trying to run into him. Nothing was said, either by him or by her, and so neither he nor she arranged a meeting outright; they just tried to come across each other.

One place where it was possible for them to run into each other was the wood, where the peasant women used to go with sacks to gather grass for the cows. Evgeny knew this, and because of it he went past this wood every day. Every day he told himself that he would not go there, and every day it ended in him making his way to the wood and, hearing the sound of voices, he would stand still behind a bush and look with a sinking heart to see if it was her.

Why did he need to know it if it was her? He did not know. If it had been her, and if she had been alone, he

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would not have gone to her—or so he thought—he would have run away; but he had to see her. Once, he did meet her: as he was going into the wood she came out of it with two other women, carrying a heavy sack full of grass on her back. A moment earlier, and he might perhaps have run into her in the wood, whereas now it was impossible for her to go back into the wood to him, in front of the other women. But although he acknowledged this impossibility, he still stood for a long time behind a hazel bush, at a risk of attracting the attention of the other women. Of course, she did not come back, but he had stood there waiting for a long time. And, Heavens! what charm she had in his imagination! And this was by no means the first time that he so imagined her, but the fifth, the sixth time. And the oftener he did it, the more charm she acquired in his imagination. She had never seemed so attractive to him. And not only attractive: never had she so completely possessed him.

He felt that he was losing all self-control, that he was becoming almost insane. His sternness with himself had not weakened a jot; on the contrary, he saw all the loathsomeness of his desires, of his deeds even, for his walks in the woods were a deed. He knew that he only had to run into her somewhere, to touch her in the dark, if possible, and he would abandon himself to his feeling. He knew that he was only held back by his sense of shame—shame of other people, of her, and of himself. And he knew that he was seeking circumstances in which this shame would not be apparent—either the dark, or some contact

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which would smother shame with animal passion. And therefore he knew that he was a loathsome criminal, and despised and hated himself with all his soul. He hated himself because he was still refusing to yield; every day he prayed to God to give him strength and save him from perdition, every day he made up his mind never again to make another step, never to look at her, to forget her. Every day he invented means of ridding himself of this temptation, and he used these means.

But it was all in vain.

One of the means he had invented was continual occupation; another was strenuous physical labour and fasting; a third was calling up a clear mental picture of the shame that would overtake him when everyone found out about it—his wife, his mother-in-law, his servants. He would do all this, and would feel that victory was his, but then mid-day would come, the time of their former meetings and the time when he had met her with the grass, and he would go to the wood.

So passed five agonizing days. He only saw her from a distance, but did not meet her once.

XVI

LIZA slowly recovered, began to walk again and worried about the change which had taken place in her husband, and which she did not understand.

Varvara Alexeyevna went away for a time, and the

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only stranger staying with them was Evgeny's uncle. As always, Maria Pavlovna was at home.

Evgeny was in this semi-insane state when, as often happens after June thunderstorms, there was torrential June rain which continued for two days. The rain made all work impossible—even manure was no longer carted because of the damp and dirt. All the peasants stayed indoors. The shepherds had trouble with their flocks, and finally drove them home. The cows and sheep went through the common and scattered in the farms. The women, barefoot and covered with kerchiefs, went splashing through the mud and rushed about searching for stray cows.

- Streams ran everywhere along the roads, all the grass and the leaves were covered with water, streams never ceased flowing from the gutters into bubbling pools. Evgeny sat at home with his wife, who was particularly boring that day. She questioned Evgeny several times on the reason for his bad mood, but he answered with annoyance that there was nothing wrong. She stopped asking him, but she was hurt.

They were sitting in the drawing-room after lunch. His uncle was telling them, for the hundredth time, entirely untrue stories about his high society friends. Liza was knitting a little coat and sighing, complaining about the weather and the pain in her back. His uncle advised her to lie down, and asked for some wine for himself. Evgeny was terribly bored in the house. Everything was feeble, and very boring. He was reading a book and smoking, but he did not understand what he was reading.

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‘Oh, I must go and see the rasping machine—they brought it yesterday’, he said, and he got up and went out.

‘You’d better take an umbrella.’

‘Oh no, I’ve got a leather coat. And I’m only going to the boiler-house.’

He put on his boots and his leather coat and went to the factory. But he had not gone twenty yards when he ran into her. She was coming to meet him with her skirt tucked up high over her white calves, and she was holding a shawl which was wrapped round her head and shoulders.

‘What are you doing?’ he asked, not recognising her at first. When he did recognise her, it was too late. She stopped and looked at him for a long time, smiling.

‘I’m looking for a calf. Where are you going to in this dreadful weather?’ she asked, as if she saw him every day.

‘Come into the hut’, he said suddenly, not knowing himself why he said it. It was exactly as if someone else had said these words from inside him.

She bit at her kerchief so as to hold it on, indicated with her eyes that she agreed, and ran off in the direction in which she had been going—into the garden to the hut—whereas he continued on his way, intending to turn round behind a lilac bush and to go there, too.

‘Oh, sir!’ he heard a voice behind him. ‘The mistress is calling for you. She wants you to come for a minute.’

It was Misha, their servant.

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'Oh, God, You have saved me for the second time', thought Evgeny, and went back to the house immediately. His wife reminded him that he had promised to take some medicine to a sick woman, so she asked him to take it.

While the medicine was being prepared, about five minutes elapsed. Then, when he went out taking the medicine with him, he did not dare go to the hut in case someone might see him from the house. But no sooner was he out of sight than he turned round immediately and went to the hut. In his imagination he already saw her in the middle of the hut, smiling gaily; but she was not there, and there was nothing in the hut to show that she had been there. He began to think that she had not come, that she had not heard or had not understood his words. He muttered them to himself under his breath, as if fearing that she might hear them. 'Or perhaps she didn't want to come? Why should I think that she would throw herself at me like that? She has her husband; I'm the only one to be such a cad, I have a wife, and a good wife, and yet here I am running after someone else's.' Thus he thought as he sat in the hut, which was leaking in one place and dripping from the thatch. 'But what bliss it would be if she did come! Alone here, in this rain. If only I could have her in my arms, just once, and then come what may. Oh yes', he remembered. 'If she was here, then I could see it by the imprint she's left on the ground.' He looked at the path of trampled earth leading to the hut, where no grass grew, and the fresh trace of a bare foot was still imprinted on it. 'Yes, she was

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here. But now it's finished. I'll go straight to her, no matter where I see her. I'll go to her by night.' He sat in the hut for a long time, and finally left it feeling worn out and beaten. He delivered the medicine, went home and lay down in his room, waiting for dinner.

XVII

BEFORE dinner Liza came to see him. She was still trying to think what the reason for his bad mood could be, and therefore began telling him that she was afraid he was displeased that they wanted to take her to Moscow for the birth of the child, and that she had now decided that she would stay at home, and would on no account go to Moscow. He knew she was afraid of the actual delivery as well as of not giving birth to a healthy child, and he therefore could not help being touched by the ease with which she sacrificed it all out of love for him. Everything at home was so pleasant, so joyful and pure; but in his heart all was filthy, loathsome, horrible. The whole evening Evgeny was tormented by his knowledge that, for all his sincere disgust at his own weakness, for all his firm resolve to put a stop to it, tomorrow would bring with it a repetition of the same thing.

'No, this is impossible', he said to himself, as he walked to and fro in his room. 'Surely there must be some remedy against it? Oh God! What can I do?'

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Someone knocked at his door, as foreigners do. This, he knew, was his uncle.

‘Come in’, he said.

His uncle had come as a self-appointed ambassador from his wife.

‘You know, I do really notice a change in you’, he said, ‘and I can see how it worries Liza. I can see that it’s difficult for you to leave all the work that’s already begun—and such fine work, too—but what’s to be done, *que veux-tu*? I would advise you to go away for a bit. It’ll be more peaceful, both for you and for her. And do you know, my advice is to go to the Crimea. There’s the climate, and then there’s a splendid doctor there, and you’ll get there just for the grape season.’

‘Uncle’, said Evgeny suddenly. ‘Can you keep my secret, a terrible secret that I have? A shameful secret...?’

‘For Heaven’s sake! Don’t you trust me?’

‘Uncle! You can help me. Not only help, you can save me’, said Evgeny. And the thought that he would disclose his secret to his uncle—for whom he had no respect—the thought that he would show himself to him in the most unfavourable light, that he would humble himself before him, pleased Evgeny. He felt that he was loathsome, guilty, and he wanted to punish himself.

‘Tell me, my boy. You know how fond I have become of you’, said his uncle, obviously very pleased both that there was a secret, and that it was a shameful one, and that he would be told of it, and that he might be of help.

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‘First of all I must tell you that I’m a blackguard and a cad, a scoundrel—that’s it, a scoundrel.’

‘Come, come . . .’, his uncle started, clearing his throat.

‘Yes, I must be a scoundrel, if I, Liza’s husband, Liza’s!—one has to know her purity, her love—if I, her husband, want to be unfaithful to her with a peasant woman!—’

‘But why do you want to? You haven’t *been* unfaithful to her?’

‘Yes—that is, I’ve as good as ~~been~~ unfaithful to her, because it did not depend on me. I was ready to do it. I was prevented, but I would now . . . I would now. I don’t know what I would do.’

‘But, please, explain to me. . . .’

‘Well, it’s like this. When I was a bachelor I was stupid enough to have relations with a woman here, from our village. That’s to say, as I met her in the wood, in the field. . . .’

‘And was she pretty?’ said his uncle.

Evgeny winced at this question, but he needed external help so badly that he behaved as if he had not heard it, and went on.

‘Well, I thought it was just like that, that I would break it off and it would all be finished. And I did break it off, before my marriage, and for nearly a year I didn’t see her or think about her—it seemed strange to Evgeny to listen to himself, to listen to the description of his own state of mind—‘then suddenly, I don’t know why—really, sometimes one believes in witchcraft—I saw her, and a worm crept into my heart, and

is gnawing at me. I blame myself, and I understand the full horror of my action, that is, of what I might do at any minute, and yet I am ready to do it; and if I haven't done anything, it's only because God saved me. I was going to her yesterday, when Liza called me.

‘What, in the rain?’

‘Yes. I’m worn out by it, uncle, and I’ve decided to tell you about it and to ask for your help.’

‘Yes, of course, it’s not a good thing to do it on one’s own estate. People will find out. I quite see that Liza is weak, and that you must spare her, but why do it on your own estate?’

Once more Evgeny tried not to hear what his uncle had said, and he came to the heart of the matter all the more quickly.

‘But you must save me from myself. This is what I ask you to do. Today it was chance that prevented me from doing anything, but tomorrow, another time, I shall not be prevented. And she knows now. Don’t leave me alone.’

‘Yes, you are right’, said his uncle. ‘But are you really so much in love?’

‘Oh, it’s not that at all. It’s not that, it’s some kind of force that has seized me and holds me. I don’t know what to do. Perhaps I’ll become stronger, then. . . .’

‘Well, it all points to the same thing’, said his uncle. ‘Let’s go to the Crimea.’

‘Yes, yes, let’s go, and whenever I’m with you I’ll talk to you.’

XVIII

THE fact of entrusting his secret to his uncle and, above all else, the pangs of conscience and shame that he had endured ever since that rainy day, sobered Evgeny. They decided to go to Yalta in a week's time. During that week Evgeny went to town to get money for the journey, worked at home and in the office, gave orders about his estate, and he again felt cheerful and close to his wife, and began to revive morally.

Thus, without once seeing Stepanida after that rainy day, he left for the Crimea with his wife. In the Crimea they spent two perfect months. Evgeny had so many new impressions that it seemed to him as if all the past was wiped from his memory. They met old friends in the Crimea and became even more friendly with them, and in addition they made new friends. Life there was a perpetual holiday for Evgeny, besides being both useful and instructive. They made friends there with a former Marshal of Nobility of their own province, an intelligent, liberal-minded man who became fond of Evgeny, taught him a great deal and won him round. At the end of August Liza gave birth to a fine, healthy girl, and gave birth to her unexpectedly easily.

In September the Irtyenevs went home—four of them, including the baby and the wet-nurse, as Liza could not feed the baby herself. Quite free from his former terrors, Evgeny returned home a completely new and happy man. Having lived through all that husbands do live through at the birth of a child, he had

grown to love his wife even more. The feeling which he had towards the baby when he took it in his arms was strange, new, and very pleasant—a ticklish feeling. There was something else new in his life now, too, apart from his work on the estate, for thanks to his friendship with Douumchin (the former Marshal of Nobility), a new interest had sprung up in his heart—an interest in local government problems, which was partly due to ambition and partly due to a sense of duty. In October there was to be an extraordinary meeting, at which he was to be elected. After he came home he went once to town, and once to see Douumchin.

The very thought of his torments of temptation and moral struggle never even occurred to him and he could only reconstruct them with difficulty in his imagination. It all seemed to him as something akin to a temporary fit of madness into which he had been plunged.

He felt so free from all that that he was not even afraid to ask the bailiff about it at the first opportunity when they remained alone together. As he had already spoken to him about it he was not ashamed to ask him.

‘Well, and is Sidor Pechnikov still not living at home?’ he asked.

‘No, he’s still in town.’

‘And what about her?’

‘Oh, she’s a silly little thing! She’s carrying on with Zinovy now. Quite a loose character she’s become.’

‘Well, that’s fine’, thought Evgeny. ‘It’s amazing how little I care, and how I’ve changed.’

XIX

ALL Evgeny's wishes were fulfilled. He had been able to keep the estate, the factory was a success, the beet crops were splendid, and the profits were expected to be large; his wife had had a child with no trouble, and his mother-in-law had gone away. And he was elected unanimously.

It was after his election, and Evgeny was returning home from the town. People had congratulated him, and he had had to thank them, and he had dined and drunk about five glasses of champagne. He now had quite new plans for life, and as he was driving home he thought about them. It was an Indian summer. The road was beautiful, the sun was bright. As he drove up to the house Evgeny was thinking that, as a result of his election, he would have among the peasants just the position he had always dreamed of having—that is, a position in which he would be able to serve them not only by production, which provides work, but by direct influence. He was imagining how, in three years' time, his own and other peasants would judge him. 'Like this one here', he thought, looking at a man and a woman who were crossing the road in front of him as he drove through the village. They stopped to let the carriage pass. The man was old Pechnikov, and the woman was Stepanida. Evgeny looked at her, recognised her, and felt with joy that he remained completely unmoved. She was just as pretty as ever, but this did not affect him at all. He arrived home, and his wife

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met him on the steps of the house. It was a beautiful evening.

‘Well, can we offer you our congratulations?’ said his uncle.

‘Yes, they elected me.

‘Well, that’s splendid. We must celebrate.’

The next morning Evgeny rode over the estate, which he had been neglecting. A new threshing-machine was working on the farm. While he was inspecting its work, Evgeny walked among the peasant women, trying not to notice them. But no matter how he tried, he once or twice noticed the black eyes and red kerchief of Stepanida, who was carrying the straw. Once or twice he looked at her out of the corner of his eye and felt that again there was something, but could not quite realise what it was. Only the next day, when he again rode over to the threshing-floor at the farm and spent two hours there—which was quite unnecessary—and let his eyes unceasingly fondle the familiar, beautiful figure of the young woman, did he feel that he was damned, utterly damned, irrevocably damned. Once more the same torments, once more all the horror and the terror—and there was no salvation.



And what he had expected did, in fact, happen to him. Without knowing himself how it came about he found himself in the evening of the very next day near her back-yard, opposite her hay-shed, where they had

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once met in the autumn. Pretending that he was going for a walk, he stopped there and smoked a cigarette. A neighbouring woman saw him and, as he was walking back, he heard her saying to someone:

‘Go on, he’s waiting for you, I’ll be bound, standing there. Go on, you fool!’

He saw a woman—it was her—run to the shed, but by then it was impossible for him to turn back because a peasant had just met him, and he went home.

XX

WHEN he went into the drawing-room everything seemed strange and unnatural to him. He had got up in the morning still feeling cheerful and resolved to give her up, to forget, not to allow himself to think. But, without himself noticing how it happened, his whole morning’s work not only failed to interest him but he had even tried to be rid of it. What had formerly seemed important to him and had given him pleasure had now lost all significance. He tried, unconsciously, to free himself from his business affairs. He felt that he must be free in order to thrash it out, to think it over. And he did get rid of his work, and remained alone. But as soon as he was alone he went off to wander about the garden, in the wood. And all those places were besmirched by memories, memories which held him in their grip. He realised that he was walking in

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the garden, and told himself that he was thinking something over, whereas he was not thinking about anything, but was frantically, unreasonably waiting for her, waiting for her to understand by some miracle how much he desired her, waiting for her to come there, or somewhere where no one would see, or to come to him at night, perhaps, when there would be no moon, and no one, not even she herself, would see, and on such a night she would come to him, and he would touch her body. . . .

‘So that’s the way I broke it off when I wanted to!’ he said to himself. ‘So I lived with a clean, healthy woman for my health’s sake! Oh no, she obviously can’t be trifled with like that. I thought that I had taken her, but it was she who took me; she took me and never let me go. Why, I thought that I was free, but I was not free. I deceived myself when I got married. It was all nonsense, deceit. Since I began to live with her I’ve experienced a new feeling, the true feeling of a husband. Yes, I *had* to live with her.

‘Oh yes, there are two lives open to me: one is the life that I have started with Liza; service, the estate, the child, people’s respect. If that is the life I want, then it is essential that she, Stepanida, should not be here. She must be sent away, as I said, or she must be destroyed, so that she would not be here. And the other life—that’s here, too. Take her away from her husband, give him money, forget the shame and scandal, and live with her. But in that case there must be no Liza or Mimi (the child). No, the child wouldn’t matter after all, but Liza must not be here, she must go away. If only

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she could find out about it, curse me, and go away. If she could find out that I have been unfaithful to her with a peasant woman, that I am a deceiver, a cad. No, that would be too dreadful! That's impossible. Oh, but perhaps it might happen', he went on thinking, 'it might happen! Liza might get ill, and die. She might die, then everything would be perfect.

'Perfect! Oh, what a blackguard I am! No, if anyone dies, it must be her. If she, Stepanida, were to die, what a good thing it would be.

'Oh yes, that's how people poison or kill their wives or mistresses. That's the way to do it —take a revolver and go and call her, and then instead of an embrace, a bullet in the chest, and it's all over.

'She must be a devil! A real devil. It is, after all, against my will that she took possession of me.

'Kill someone? Yes. There are only two ways out: to kill my wife or to kill her. Because it's impossible to live like this.¹ Impossible I must think it out and plan it. What will happen if things go on as they are?

'What will happen is that I shall tell myself again that I don't want her, that I'll give her up, but I shall only say it, and in the evening I shall go to her backyard again, and she will know it, and she will come. And either people will find out and tell my wife, or I shall tell her myself, because I can't lie to her. I can't live like that. I can't. It will be found out. Everyone will find out, even Paasha and the blacksmith. Well, then, how can I live like that?

'I can't. There are only two ways out: to kill my

¹ The alternative version of the ending starts here

wife, or to kill her. Though still. . . . Ah, yes, there is a third way: to kill myself', he said aloud, under his breath, and suddenly it made his flesh creep. 'Yes, myself; then I wouldn't have to kill them.' He felt terrified, precisely because he felt that only this way out was possible. 'I have a revolver. Shall I really kill myself? That's something I never thought I should do. How strange it will be.'

He went back to his own room, and immediately opened the cupboard which contained his revolver. But he had scarcely opened it when his wife came into the room.

XXI

He threw a newspaper over the revolver.

'Again the same', she said with alarm, looking at him.

'The same what?'

'The same terrible expression that you used to have before, when you didn't want to tell me. Genya, darling, tell me what the matter is. I can see you are suffering. Tell me, and you'll feel better. Whatever it may be, anything is better than this suffering of yours. Why, I know that it's nothing bad.'

'You know?'

'Tell me, tell me, tell me. I won't let you go.'

He smiled pathetically.

'Tell you? No, that's impossible. And anyway, there's nothing to tell.'

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Perhaps he would have told her, but at that moment the nurse came into the room to ask if she could take the child out for a walk. Liza went to dress the child.

‘So you will tell me? I’m just coming.’

‘Yes, perhaps....’

She could never forget the smile full of suffering with which he said this. She left the room.

Hurriedly, stealthily, like a bandit, he seized the revolver and drew it from its holster. ‘Yes, it’s loaded, but that was a long time ago, and one cartridge is missing. Well, come what may.’

He pressed it to his temple, almost hesitated, but no sooner did he think of Stepanida, of his decision not to see her, of the struggle, the temptation, the fall, of yet another struggle, than he shuddered with horror. ‘No, this is better.’ And he pressed the trigger.

When Liza ran into the room—she had only just come down from the balcony—he was lying face-downwards on the floor, the black, warm blood was gushing from the wound, and the corpse was still twitching.

There was an inquest. No one could explain or give reasons for the suicide. It never even entered his uncle’s head that the reason had something in common with the confession which Evgeny had made to him two months previously.

Varvara Alexeyevna assured everyone that she had always foretold it—it had been obvious when he argued. Neither Liza nor Maria Pavlovna could understand at all why it happened, yet all the same, they did not believe the doctors, who said that he had been

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insane. They could not possibly agree with this, because they knew that he had been a great deal saner than hundreds of people of his acquaintance.

And indeed, if Evgeny Irtyenev was insane, then all men are just as insane—and of those that are insane the most undoubtedly so are those who see signs of madness in other people which they do not see in themselves.

19th November, 1889.

Yasnaya Polyana.

ALTERNATIVE VERSION OF THE END OF 'THE DEVIL'

... he said to himself and, going up to the table, he took a revolver from the drawer, inspected it—one cartridge was missing—and put it in his trouser pocket.

'My God! What am I doing?' he suddenly cried and, folding his hands, he started to pray.

'Oh Lord, help me, deliver me! Thou knowest that I do not want to do something wicked, but I cannot fight alone. Help me', he said, crossing himself before the ikon.

'But surely I can control myself, I'll go and walk for a bit and think things over.'

He went out into the hall, put on a fur coat and galoshes and went out. Unconsciously his steps led

him past the garden along the field path, to the farm. At the farm the threshing-machine was still droning, and he could hear the shouts of the boys driving it. He went into the threshing-barn. She was there. He saw her at once. She was raking the corn together, and as she caught sight of him she ran swiftly through the scattered ears of corn, looking pert and gay, her eyes laughing. Evgeny did not want to look at her, but could not help it. He only came to when she disappeared out of sight. The bailiff reported that they were now threshing grain that had deteriorated in store, and that, consequently, it took longer and the output of grain was smaller. Evgeny went up to the drum, which was knocking now and again as the badly-spread sheaves went through it, and asked the bailiff if there were many sheaves that were spoiled like that.

‘It should be about five cart-loads.’

‘Well, then . . .’ Evgeny started, and did not finish what he was saying. She had come up to the drum, raking the wheat-ears from under it, and scorched him with her laughing gaze. . .

That gaze spoke of the gay, light-hearted love between them, of how she knew that he desired her, that he had come to her in the barn, and that she, as always, was ready to live and enjoy herself with him, giving no thought to any conditions or consequences. Evgeny felt himself in her power, but did not want to surrender.

He remembered his prayer, and tried to repeat it. He started to say it to himself, but immediately felt that it was useless. One thought now completely engrossed

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him: how to arrange a meeting with her so that no one else would notice?

'If we finish this today, may we start a new rick, or shall we wait till tomorrow?' asked the bailiff.

'Yes, yes', Evgeny answered, and involuntarily moved after her, towards the pile of wheat-ears which she and another woman were raking together.

'Am I really unable to control myself?' he said to himself. 'Am I really damned? Oh God! But no, there is no God. There's a devil. And she is it. But I don't want it, I don't want it. A devil, yes, a devil.'

He went right up to her, drew the revolver out of his pocket, and once, twice, three times shot her in the back. She ran and fell on the pile of chaff.

'Oh, Lord! Heavens! What's all this?' the women screamed.

'No, I didn't do it by accident. I killed her on purpose!' shouted Evgeny. 'Send for the police.'

He walked home, and without saying anything to his wife he went up to his study and locked the door.

'Don't come to me!' he shouted through the door to his wife. 'You'll find out all about it!'

An hour later he rang the bell, and said to the servant: 'Go and find out if Stepanida is alive.'

The servant had already found out everything, and said that she died an hour ago.

'Very well. Now leave me alone. When the police or the magistrate come, tell me.'

The police and the magistrate came the next morning, and Evgeny, after taking leave of his wife and child, was taken to prison.

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He was tried. It was in the early days of trial by jury.¹ He was recognised as temporarily of unsound mind, and condemned only to religious penance.

He spent nine months in prison and one month in a monastery.

He began to drink while he was still in prison, went on doing so in the monastery, and returned home a weak, irresponsible dipsomaniac.

Varvara Alexeyevna assured everyone that she had always foretold this—it had been clear when he argued. Neither Liza nor Maria Pavlovna could understand why it had happened at all, and yet did not believe what the doctors said, that he was insane, a psychopath. They could not agree with this, because they knew that he was saner than hundreds of people of their acquaintance.

And indeed, if Evgeny Irtyenov was insane when he committed his crime, then everyone is insane—and the most insane are undoubtedly those who see signs of madness in others which they do not see in themselves.

¹ A reference to the extreme leniency with which the early juries in Russia exercised their functions. (Translator's Note.)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

TOLSTOY wrote *The Devil* in less than a fortnight, in November, 1889. It belongs, therefore, to the same period as *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Resurrection*, and *Father*

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Sergius. It was in these four novels that Tolstoy expressed his ideas about physical love and the social and moral evils for which he considered it to be responsible—a question which interested him deeply at that time. Although all four novels have this central theme in common, the treatment of the theme varies very considerably in each of them. In *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Resurrection* and *Father Sergius*, solutions to the problem are offered—sometimes highly controversial solutions, as in *The Kreutzer Sonata*—but in *The Devil* Tolstoy does no more than state the problem, which he does with great force, probably owing to the semi-autobiographical nature of the book.

The existence of *The Devil* was a closely-guarded secret because Tolstoy felt that the subject of the novel might offend his wife, and the manuscript was kept in St Petersburg in the house of a friend. In 1898, when Tolstoy was sending various miscellaneous manuscripts to his publisher in order to raise funds for the Dukhobors, he contemplated including *The Devil* with the other works he had chosen for publication. He read the manuscript through, but decided not to publish it. It was probably in 1909 that Tolstoy wrote the alternative version of the ending of the novel. In the spring of that year Countess Tolstoy found the manuscript, which had not previously attracted her attention because it had been transcribed by Tolstoy's disciples, Chertkov and I. I. Gorbunov-Posadov; however, seeing various corrections in the manuscript which Tolstoy had made in his own handwriting, she read it, and at once realised that it had been written by her

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husband. There was a scene of jealousy and tears on both sides, after which, he notes in his diary, they 'both felt better'. *The Devil* was finally published in 1911, after Tolstoy's death.

The Devil is not a *roman à clef* in the true sense, but many of the incidents and some of the characters in it are taken from life. In his diary Tolstoy at first referred to the book as *The Friedrichs Story*. N. N. Friedrichs (or Fredericks) was a magistrate in Tula in the 1870's. He lived for some time with a peasant woman named Stepanida Mounitzina, whose husband was a coachman in Tula. This liaison was of long standing and apparently based on mutual love, but in spite of it Friedrichs subsequently married a young girl of his own class with whom he was not in love. Three months after his marriage he shot and killed his mistress while she was working in a threshing-barn. The motive for his crime was, it seems, his wife's jealousy. On medical evidence Friedrichs was acquitted, but his character changed fundamentally as a result of the murder, and he became deeply religious. In December, 1874, he was run over and killed by a train—whether his death was accidental or intentional was never established.¹

Apart from using Friedrichs' story as a frame-work for his novel, Tolstoy also borrowed a number of details from it—the peasant woman's name, for

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instance, the manner and place of her death, and so on. But, as Tolstoy himself admitted, the novel contains much autobiographical material, and he really did no more than use Friedrichs' story as a peg on which to hang his own experiences.

Shortly before his death Tolstoy told his biographer, Biryukov: 'In my youth I led a very bad life, and two incidents that occurred then particularly tormented me, and still torment me to this day. I am telling you this as my biographer, and I ask you to include it in my biography. These two incidents were: a liaison with a peasant woman from our village before my marriage — there is an allusion to this in my story *The Devil*. The second incident was the crime I committed against Gasha, a maid-servant living in my aunt's house. She was a virgin, I seduced her, they turned her out, and she went to the bad.' The second incident that Tolstoy referred to was, of course, the origin of Nekhlyudov's seduction of Katyusha in *Resurrection*. The peasant woman with whom Tolstoy lived before his marriage was Aksinya Bazyrkina. His relations with her made a great impression on him, and he remembered her all his life—he mentioned her in his diary when he was over eighty. His liaison with her continued for four years, and there are frequent references to her in his diary from 1858 when he first met her to 1868—years after their liaison had been brought to an end by his marriage. For example, on 10-13th May, 1858, Tolstoy wrote: 'A wonderful Whit Sunday. Caught a glimpse of Aksinya. Very pretty. Waited in vain all these days. Today in the big old wood. . . . Red sun-tan, eyes. . . .

I'm in love as never before in my life. Have no other thoughts. Am tormented. All my strength tomorrow.' Periods of indifference, when he noted 'Nothing but disgust' with Aksinya, were followed by interludes of violent passion and perhaps genuine love, which made him confess to 'the feeling no longer of a stag, but of husband to wife'. This must have made a lasting impression on him, for some thirty years later he endowed Evgeny in *The Devil* with precisely the same sentiments. Some fifty years later, only a year before his death, Tolstoy noted in his diary: 'I looked at bare legs, and remembered Aksinya, that she is still alive and, they say, Vermil is my son, and I don't ask her forgiveness, have not repented, don't do penance every hour, and presume to censure others!'

Unlike Liza, her counterpart in *The Devil*, Countess Tolstoy knew about her husband's liaison with Aksinya—Tolstoy had given his wife his diaries to read before their marriage. There are several references to Aksinya in Countess Tolstoy's diaries, and she was extremely jealous of her—in *The Devil* Tolstoy makes a reference to Liza's jealousy, but it does not play any part in the novel, and indeed, apart from jealousy, Liza and Countess Tolstoy appear to have nothing in common. Some months after her marriage Countess Tolstoy saw Aksinya washing floors at Yasnaya Polyana together with another peasant woman—probably the origin of the spring-cleaning episode in the novel—and noted in her diary pangs of ungovernable jealousy leading to a probably less than objective description of her husband's former mistress as 'just a peasant woman, fat and

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white'. In 1909, writing of *Who are the Murderers?* which she was then reading in manuscript, Countess Tolstoy wrote: '... it could be interesting. But the same old approach—descriptions of peasant life. His relish at a woman's *full* bosom and a girl's sunburnt legs, all that once so strongly tempted him; the same Aksinya, with shining eyes re-emerging almost unconsciously now, at the age of eighty, from the depths of his memory and the feelings of former years. Aksinya was a peasant woman at Yasnaya Polyana, Lev Nikolayevitch's last mistress before his marriage, and she is still living in the village. Somehow all this painfully came back to me.'

Tolstoy's liaison with Aksinya was 'not the only incident in his life which he incorporated in *The Devil*'. In 1880, after his 'conversion', when Tolstoy was sixty-four years old and already a world figure, he felt a strong physical attraction for a woman called Domna, the servants' cook at Yasnaya Polyana. Tolstoy described this in a letter to Chertkov, dated 24th July, 1884: 'I will tell you something which happened to me, and which I have not so far told to anyone else. I succumbed to sensual temptation. I suffered terribly, struggled against it, and felt helpless. And I felt that I would succumb at the first opportunity. Finally I committed the most abominable action; I arranged a meeting with her, and went to it. That day I was to give a lesson to my second son. I walked past his window into the garden, and suddenly he called to me and reminded me that we were to have a lesson that day—something he never did usually. I came to my

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senses and did not keep my appointment. It is obvious that God saved me. And He really did save me. But after that, did the temptation leave me? No, it still remained. And I again felt that I would be sure to fall. Then I confessed to a tutor who was living with us and told him not to leave me for a certain time, and to help me. He was a good man. He understood me, and followed me about as if I was a child. Later I also took steps to have this woman sent away, and I saved myself from sin—not from mental sin, but only from carnal sin—and I know that this was right.' The tutor referred to by Tolstoy—V. I. Alexeyev—has left his version of the ~~story~~ which adds nothing to it apart from a few picturesque details. Thus, after describing how Tolstoy asked him not to leave him for a time, Alexeyev continues: 'We went out, and then he told me how almost every day, during his walks, he used to meet Domna, the servants' cook, how he began by silently following her for a few days, and this gave him pleasure.... Then, as he followed her, he took to whistling to her; then he began to accompany her and talk to her; and finally he even made a date with her.' Alexeyev has left this portrait of Domna: 'She was a young woman, employed as the servants' cook. I believe her husband was in the army. She was about twenty-two or twenty-three years old; I wouldn't call her pretty, but she had a strawberries-and-cream complexion, and was a tall, buxom, healthy and attractive young woman.'

It will be seen from the foregoing remarks that *The Devil* is based on three separate sources, which Tolstoy blended to form an artistic whole. Friedrichs' story

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provided the framework for the plot and, notably, the ending of the novel. It is interesting that the second version of the ending (Stepanida's murder) which seems the less probable of the two was actually based on fact. That Tolstoy drew a spiritual self-portrait when he described Irtyenev seems clear—physically, however, Irtyenev appears to be rather a portrait of Friedrichs, who was very short-sighted—a defect of Irtyenev's which is stressed in the novel. Tolstoy's liaison with Aksinya before his marriage provided material for the description of Irtyenev's relations with Stepanida before *his* marriage—Tolstoy seems to have had a child by Aksinya, for example. It is probable, too, that Stepanida was a portrait of Aksinya rather than of Domna, with whom he never actually lived and who therefore could not have had the same physical hold over him that Aksinya had, but there is no clear evidence on this point. The physical desire which Tolstoy, as a married man, felt for Domna and his spiritual struggles at that time clearly helped him to describe Irtyenev's similar spiritual conflict after his marriage. The part played by Alexeyev, the tutor, in Tolstoy's own life is transferred to Evgeny's uncle in the novel. Many other lesser details in the novel are, of course, taken from all three sources.

APRIL 117 LYON.